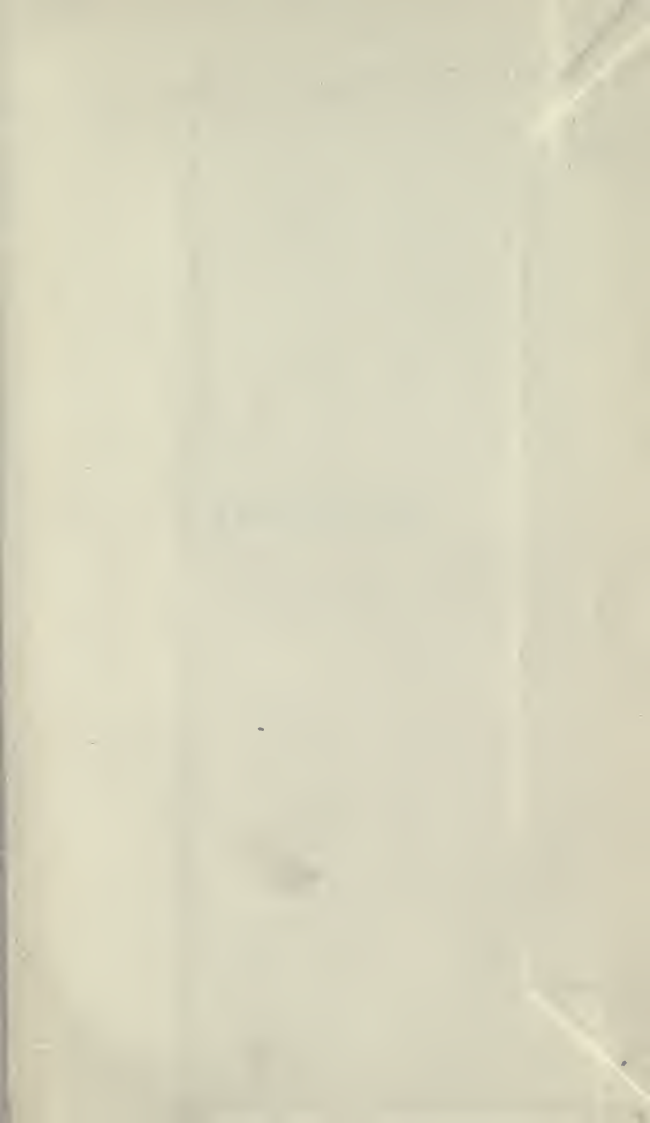


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HAWKSTONE.

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HAWKSTONE:

A TALE OF AND FOR ENGLAND

IN 184-.

[William^{by} Sewell]

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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HAWKSTONE.

CHAPTER I.

THE sun was streaming in through the lattice, when Bentley awoke to a full consciousness of what had passed in that frightful night. As he threw his eyes round the little low whitewashed room in which he lay, he could recognise nothing as familiar to him; but it was clean and decent. The pallet on which he was stretched was furnished with a white curtain; a deal table at the side contained a bottle and glass, and some linen, which seemed intended to be used in dressing his wound; and his clothes had been carefully folded and arranged on an old worsted-worked chair at the foot of the bed. There were also on the walls some coarse coloured prints representing saints, and one of the Blessed Virgin with the Infant Saviour in her arms; and a roughly-carved crucifix of bone was placed over the chimney; and lying on the bed, turned down so as to mark the place, was a volume, which Bentley took up, and found it to be a book of Roman Catholic devotion — “the Hours of the Blessed Virgin.” Before he could look into it farther he heard the footsteps of two persons coming softly up the stairs; and one of them gently opening

the door, they both came in. One was a man — young, but his countenance marked already with strong lines, and his dress that of one of the superior miners. As Bentley looked on him he almost fancied that he recognised his face ; and the same kind of impression seemed to be made on the man himself, for he started slightly on seeing Bentley, and took care to place himself with his back to the light, that his countenance might be less noticed. The other person was a female. She was dressed in a habit of coarse black stuff, only relieved by a square fold of linen of the purest white round her neck, and a white bandage above her forehead to confine a black veil of the same stuff with her dress, which veil hung down and concealed her hair, and all but a portion of her face. She had a rosary of large black beads round her neck, with a crucifix of ebony depending from it ; and the singular purity and serenity of her features, accompanied by a look of abstraction, grave and solemnised, yet full of mildness, gave to a face by no means young or beautiful an expression which rivetted the attention of Bentley more than any thing he had ever seen.

“ How are you this morning ? ” asked the young man. And he proceeded, with a hand evidently skilled in surgery, to unfasten the bandages of Bentley’s wound, and prepared to dress it anew. Bentley thanked him for his trouble, and would fain have asked where he was, and who were the parties before him ; but the first attempt he made to question his attendant was replied to by a surly admonition to remain quiet : and the burning of his hand and blackness of his parched lips were enough to justify the warning against any excitement. With a tread evidently accustomed to a sick room, and moving noiselessly about, without officiousness,

the Sister of Charity (for the female was one of those admirable women) aided the man in his operations; and when they were concluded, and the Sister had smoothed the pillow, and placed some toast-and-water by the bed-side, they both withdrew, leaving Bentley to fall once more into a disturbed slumber. When he awoke he was apparently still alone, but his curtain had been closed, and stretching out his hand to put it aside, he saw the same female as before; but she was kneeling with her back towards him, and with her eyes upturned to the image of the Virgin, she was repeating to herself her devotions, with a depth and fervency of feeling which Bentley dared not intrude on. He let the curtain silently fall again, that he might not interrupt her. When they were finished she rose up and quietly approached the bed to see if he was still asleep. Bentley could not but thank her earnestly for her care of him; but his gratitude was mixed with a strange feeling of suspicion and dislike at being thus brought into contact with a Roman Catholic, of whom he entertained all the vague and irrational alarm which has been diffused among Protestants by the coarse indiscriminate abuse of every thing that is found in their system. It was irrational, because indiscriminating; because it made no separation between the Catholicism and the Popery of the system, and thus gave as many triumphs to Popery as it gave to it opportunities of evading just condemnations, by exposing the fallacies of unjust. At one moment there flashed across him a suspicion that the whole was a premeditated scheme. He thought of the new chapel rising at Hawkstone, — of the zeal with which he himself had preached against Popery, — of the importance which would be attached (for Bentley, like most other adversaries and advocates, rated his own

services rather high, and like most other popular preachers, sank at times into a little vanity,) to the removal of so dangerous a foe as himself to the corruptions and abominations of Popery. But to reconcile such a thought with the mere accident which took him back to the ruins, and with the mode in which Connell, Roman Catholic as he was, had acted, was impossible. It was in vain that he endeavoured to draw from the Sister an explanation of his situation. She denied, and apparently with truth and sincerity, all knowledge of what had passed, and showed no desire to hear any thing. And again recommending him to repose, she left the room.

About an hour afterwards she returned with some food for him; and when Bentley, invigorated by it, requested her to procure a Bible for him, she seemed more disposed to enter into conversation. A Bible, indeed, was not to be procured, except an old copy of the Vulgate; but she brought him some books of her own devotions, and, among them, Thomas à Kempis's "Imitation of Christ;" and as she placed them on the table, she could not help saying, "But, perhaps, you will not like these; they belong to us."

Bentley raised himself up to look at them, and laid them down in despair, while something like an expression of disgust and indignation passed over his countenance. "And you have no Bible?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, "here is one; but it is in Latin."

"And you cannot read this?" he asked.

"No," said the Sister; "but we have portions read in the chapel; and we have the 'Lives of the Saints,' and our 'Hours,' and many other devotional works."

Bentley sighed deeply.

“And you are one, then, of those,” she replied, “who believe that every thing Catholic is corrupt?”

Bentley made no objection to her use of the term Catholic, for he was little aware of the danger of allowing it to be thus abused by restricting its application to Romanism.

“I do, indeed,” he said, “lament bitterly over the sad delusions in which you are lying; and I would do much to win you from them.”

“We think,” she answered, “that you rather are labouring under delusions, and preaching corruptions. You have broken off from the great body of the Church, beyond which there can be no salvation; and you have invented new rites and new doctrines of your own; and your lives exhibit no high picture of what a Christian’s should be. And instead of being united in the bond of peace, you are broken up into factions and dissensions; and the State, on which you leaned for support, is now found to be a broken reed, and is ready to pierce your hand.”

Bentley was surprised to hear the mode in which the Sister addressed him. He did not know that controversial questions made a considerable part of the education of Roman Catholics, whether male or female, who are destined by their Church for positions of trust; and that the corporate character of the monastic societies in which that Church abounds gives to their members generally a dignity and self-confidence in the importance of their own position, as well as a sense of honourable dependence and obedience, which unite the two great elements of what is called good manners, and invests even persons raised from the lower classes with a superior character and address. He roused himself, however, to remonstrate with her on what he considered some of the grossest abominations of Popery.

But her answer to all he said was steady and quiet. It was the Church who taught her; she did not like in such matters to depend on her own judgment: she believed what the Apostles believed, and what the Fathers taught; and would not willingly be wise in her own eyes, or trust to her own understanding.

It was in vain that Bentley referred her to the Bible. The Bible, she said, was to be read under the teaching of the Church; it might easily be wrested to the destruction of rash and ignorant men, who would listen to no guidance: and she could not put upon it, by her own judgment, weak and fallible as it was, any meaning contrary to the received declarations of the Holy Catholic Church. Into all this discussion the Sister entered temperately, and yet earnestly, and with a power of expression and reasoning which excited Bentley's surprise. Still more surprised was he to find that all his own observations were powerless against her. He spoke strongly, as he felt deeply; and used expressions which, however just as a description of the form which Popery assumes in the lowest and most ignorant of its followers, were neither true nor respectful in regard to the person whom he was addressing. For this is the great secret of Popery, and the mystery of its strength, that under the same forms and outward comprehension it contains several distinct applications of itself, and becomes all things to all men, without any open compromise of opinion. The answer of the Sister was still the same. She asked Bentley on what authority he rested his own belief, and he answered, on the Bible.

She replied, "On your own interpretation of the Bible, is it not?"

And when Bentley, though earnest at first in asserting the one clear, self-evident sense of the Bible, was compelled to acknowledge that different interpretations might be and were given and de-

fended, and that each person must take and must defend his own upon his own responsibility, she preferred, she said, the opinion of the Church to the opinion of any individual.

And when Bentley, abandoning his first ground, threw himself on the authority of the Reformers, she answered, that she preferred the testimony of a Church which traced itself to the Apostles, and had continued firm for eighteen hundred years, to one only two hundred years old, and which had its origin in individuals like Henry VIII., Luther, and Calvin. Bentley spoke of the virtues and holiness of the Reformers; but the Sister replied by the lives of the many self-denying holy men who have lived in the Romish Church. She asked if Protestants could boast of more, or even of as many? She contrasted the comforts and indulgences of many a Protestant clergyman, his domestic blessings and modern refinements, with the discipline and asceticism of a monastic life. And though Bentley poured forth all his eloquence against such corruptions from Gospel truth, he could not deny that, in itself, a life of self-denying religion was higher than one of mere innocent enjoyment.

"And you are yourself a nun?" he said; for, added to other defects which incapacitated him from entering successfully into the controversy with Popery, he knew little of its interior regulations.

"I am a Sister of Charity," she replied.

"And your occupation is ——"

"To attend the sick, chiefly," she replied, "in this place. But we have also a school, and we visit the poor, and give our priest information which he requires in the management of his flock."

"I cannot but wonder," said Bentley, "that you have been allowed to establish yourself here. Is there not a law against it?"

The countenance of the Sister underwent a change; and, almost with indignation, she exclaimed, "And do you forbid others to do what you neglect to do yourselves? Have you not allowed in this place, as in so many others, a miserable population to spring up, whom you make the slaves and the tools of your own covetousness? Are not your manufacturers and your mining proprietors accumulating thousands every year by the sweat and the blood of the poor? Do they not draw them from places where they may be within reach of religion, and herd them together here without a church, or a minister, or the Sacraments, or the Bible, leaving them in the midst of a land which calls itself Christian in a state worse than heathens — worse, because without the knowledge of their God, or the means of approaching Him, you have given them the knowledge of the world, and of the devil? And when we would come among them, and devote ourselves to their care, you repel us with jealousy and abuse."

Bentley was silent.

"Will you think," she continued, "how many horrible accidents necessarily happen in this district? Scarcely a day occurs without some loss of life or limb by explosions, or falls, or entanglement with machinery, without speaking of the fearful disorders to which labours like these are subject. Has Sir Matthew Blake, or any other proprietor who thrives in luxury upon these risks and sufferings — has he laid by any portion of his vast wealth to found even an hospital for those who lose their strength, or their limbs, or their life, in pampering his insatiable covetousness? And if we have been sent here to undertake this work of mercy, are we to be treated with scorn and contempt?"

Bentley was still silent, for many most painful thoughts were crowding on him.

"But you are weary, I see," she said, gently, as he sunk back on his pillow; "and you must not talk any more. I was wrong in allowing it. But you are a Protestant; and whenever you hear our religion abused, will you remember that you were once nursed by Catholic Sisters of Charity?"

Bentley replied with fervour, that he should never forget it. And as she left the room he lay back, with less anxiety, to think over the prospect before him. He would, indeed, willingly have made use of some of the devotional works which the Sister had brought him; but in the midst of the most elevated piety he was startled and terrified at the language in which the Blessed Virgin was appealed to, and made the centre of the worshipper's hopes and affections, almost to the exclusion of the Almighty. And, as this frightful instance of the Mariolatry of the Romish Church was brought back palpably to his mind, he felt the favourable impressions die away which had been made by the Sister of Charity. Why or how it was that he was unable to cope with her in argument, he could not see; but he felt that his cause was right, and yet he knew not how to defend it — knew not, in one word, that the principles of the Sister were, for the most part, true, but that her facts were false; and that nothing but a knowledge of facts could show the inconsistency between the professions of Popery and its real conduct — between its pretended antiquity and real novelty — and so enable the Church to defeat it by its own arguments. In the midst of these reflections he once more sank into a sleep, and woke to find the Sister again sitting by the side of his bed, and another female in the same dress, but older and more matronly, looking on him with her.

"He is young, and seems good and amiable," said the elder Sister. "How sad that he should be lost in heresy, and cut off from the Church!"

The younger sighed; but Bentley awoke just then, and they told him that it was necessary to look at the dressing of the wound. As Bentley prepared himself for the operation, the same man came into the room whom he had seen at first, and catching his full face in the light, Bentley could not refrain from calling him by his name. "What, Cookesley?" he cried — "How are you here?"

But Cookesley stood behind the Sisters, and with his finger to his lips motioned him to be silent. The Sisters seemed surprised at the recognition, but Cookesley himself made some remark on Bentley's having mistaken him, and, busy with their work of benevolence, they seldom indulged in idle curiosity. The dressing finished, however, the man proposed remaining a little to make some medical inquiries of Bentley, and the Sisters withdrew. He waited for a short time with his finger to his mouth, until they had gone down stairs; and then coming up to the bed-side, he suffered Bentley to put out his hand, which he took kindly as that of an old acquaintance.

"Cookesley," said Bentley, "is it possible this can be you?"

"And I may say the same to you, may I not?" answered the other. "Is it possible this can be you?" And he affected to smile, but it was with an expression of shame and sorrow, which he could ill conceal.

"And what are you doing here in this dress?" asked Bentley. "Have you left London? I thought you were walking the hospitals there? When we met last you were just going there."

Cookesley affected again to laugh, and said, "Oh,

that's all over; but you see, happily for you, I have not forgotten the art."

"And your father and mother," said Bentley, "do they know you are here?"

"Oh, yes, yes, all's right," muttered Cookesley.

But Bentley saw by the working of his countenance that all was not right; and, as the recollection of days came over him when they had been school-fellows together and companions, living in the same town, and associating in all their amusements, he could not help feeling alarmed at his present appearance under such circumstances.

"Are you in business here?" said Bentley.

"Yes, yes, in business; but you must not ask questions."

And the hard dirty hands and coarseness of dress refuted Bentley's suggestion.

Cookesley, however, would not allow him to say more, but proceeded cautiously to the door, called to some one at the bottom of the stairs, ordered them to make no noise, and not to come up stairs; that the sick person was going to sleep, and he would watch him for half an hour. And then returning and bolting the door softly, he came and stood before the bed.

"Bentley," he said, with a low voice, "can you keep up your nerves? are you frightened?"

"I am in the hands of Providence," said Bentley; "and though I know that I must be in danger, I can resign myself to Him."

A slight sneer passed over Cookesley's face at the mention of Providence.

"Providence has not taken much care of you just now," he said, "except that you have met with me; and I can't forget old days."

"Providence will take care of me," said Bentley, firmly; "I have no fear."

"You have taken the oath?" said Cookesley.

"I have," said Bentley.

"And do you mean to keep it?"

"Most assuredly!"

"Your life depends on it," said Cookesley.

"And are you then," asked Bentley, "mixed up in all these criminal proceedings and plots, whatever they are?"

"And so you did not recognise me," said Cookesley; "but of course you could not. You didn't like the taste of our wine, ah!"

"Horrible," exclaimed Bentley, shuddering at the recollection. "And you to partake in such a frightful act of mockery!"

"It may be mockery, or mummary, or any thing you please to call it," said the other; but what are your crowns, and sceptres, and bishops' wigs, and judges' red gowns, but mockery and mummary? And it does very well to hold our fellows together. They believe it all; and we wiser ones ——"

"O Cookesley, Cookesley!" cried Bentley, "are you then one of the leaders of these abandoned men?"

"I am one of those who can serve you in the scrape you have got into. How you managed to get into such a mess I can't tell; but they do say you grave people do sometimes commit little indiscretions, like sillier folks! Eh, Bentley?"

And in Cookesley's face there was an expression of ironical intelligence which made Bentley feel uncomfortable.

"What brought you to the ruins at that time of night, Master Bentley, eh?" and he laughed significantly.

"Mere accident," said Bentley; "I had lost my watch."

"Mere accident, pure accident!" replied Cookes-

ley, with the same significant, intelligent laugh. "All these things are mere accident. And so, when that fellow Wheeler was going to shoot his wife, you, like a gallant hero, preferred getting stabbed yourself."

And again he laughed. All this to Bentley's mind was unintelligible; and he was proceeding to explain the facts, but Cookesley, looking at a heavy silver watch which he pulled out of his coarse workmen's trousers, told him they had no time for joking now. "You must do something for me at once, or I cannot help you."

"I will do nothing," said Bentley, "unless you will tell me something of yourself, where you have been, and what you are doing. I cannot commit myself farther in perfect blindness as to the hands into which I have fallen."

"Would you hear my history?" said Cookesley. "It is short enough."

"I went to London, as you know; I carried there much the same kind of education that young boys get at school and at home. I walked the hospitals, cut up bodies and cut off limbs, till I cared no more for the living than I did for the dead. We had a good merry party together — Charles Brown and Harry Morson, and all that set. My father complained that I spent all his money; my mother, that I lost my religion. You know, Bentley, as a boy, I always hated canting and preaching; and my mother did nothing else, and my father used to laugh at her. We spent our mornings in tossing about dead men's flesh in the dissecting-room, and our afternoons in dressing wounds and plastering fractures; and at night there was the play, and the Shades, and the little rattlers, and a thousand other little nameless amusements. And then came the constable; and then more applications for money:

and there were other persons I had to support besides myself; for I, too, have done foolish things." And once more he threw into his countenance, evidently agitated as it was by the tale he was telling, another glance of ironical intelligence. "And all this went on till one day—but never mind," he said, abruptly, "why look back to what can't be helped? You were more fortunate than I was. You were sent to college, and I suppose there you did learn to be grave and serious. And I never had any one to take care of me. Turned adrift in London—all of us together, all young, no homes to go to, and all kinds of misery to witness—why it turns one's stomach and hardens one's heart. And that's the best I can say for myself and for hundreds of others. How can they expect us to come to any thing else?" And Bentley gazed on the altered, vitiated, and melancholy countenance of one whom he had known as a boy full of spirit and promise, and he saw Cookesley's eyes moisten for a moment; but the unhappy man soon cast away the feeling.

"Bentley," he said, with a low voice, "it matters little what becomes of me. A few months may make me a great man, or see my head spinning on the gallows. And what matters it? '*Mors æterna quies*,' as you know we used to learn at school, and as our old master, Dr. Ellison, always repeated when he showed us how the brain thought, and the nerves felt, and the stomach lived of itself—'*Mors æterna quies*!' And perhaps my time is come; and I've had enough of life. 'Tis but a poor thing after all."

And Bentley would have followed up the subject, and spoken to him in a different tone, but Cookesley once more checked him.

"We have no time now for talking of these matters. You are in a bad plight, I honestly tell

you ; and though I can be of use to you, and will be for old remembrance sake" (and he pressed his hand kindly), "you must do as I bid you. Are you strong enough to write?"

"Quite," said Bentley, for he felt much better.

"Here then," said Cookesley, "take this pen (I'll hold the paper), and write to your old house-keeper that you will be home in two or three days ; that you are staying with a friend, and have sprained your ankle, that's all."

Once more Bentley felt a little scruple at putting his signature to a false statement, even under his present circumstances. But once more the warning of Cookesley that he was in danger triumphed over his conscience, and he wrote the letter.

"We must keep the thing quiet," said Cookesley. "If they get frightened about your disappearance, and begin making a search, all is over with you ; it would be as bad for you as for Wheeler, or for us. Hush it all up ; and in a few days I think we can manage to send you back quietly. One thing I can tell you is, that you have had a most narrow escape already : nothing but the earnestness of that Irish fellow Connell, and the way in which he told our people what you had done for him, and how much you did for the poor, would have saved you. We've too great a stake just now to trust ourselves in the mercy of any one. And we've hands with us which are ready enough for any job, and would as soon put a foe out of the way in a dark night by the side of a coal-pit, as soldiers would in open day on a field of battle. And, after all, where's the difference?"

"Cokesley," said Bentley, "I entreat you not to talk in so frightful a manner."

"Pooh ! pooh !" muttered Cookesley. " "*Mors æterna quies ! Mors æterna quies !*" What does it

signify to either of us? And now let me give you another warning. Speak to no one; know no one; and do not attempt to move. I'll do my best for you. And now I must go and send your nurse to you! Eh, Bentley?—rather a different nurse from what we have in our hospitals. I've sometimes thought," he continued, becoming grave, and his voice slightly faltering—"I've sometimes thought, that if I had had such persons about me at St. George's, and had fallen into good hands like you, and had been taken care of, with a home in London, a college, and persons to advise me and set me a good example—I've sometimes thought I should have been a different kind of person. Eh? Well, '*Mors æterna quies! Mors æterna quies!*' Mind what I tell you, and keep quiet. Good-by."

CHAPTER II.

It was about the same hour that Cookesley left Bentley on his bed, when Charles Bevan and Villiers, to the extreme interest and jealousy of Mrs. Crump, who was still at her bow-window, and to the equal surprise and curiosity of the Miss Morgans, who were assuaging their noonday appetite by a couple of cheese-cakes at Machem's the pastry-cook's, arrived, and knocked at Mabel's green entrance-door. At the announcement of Villiers's name it was impossible for Mabel, with all her dignity, to prevent a slight suffusion of gratified pride and expectation from mixing with her surprise at a visit so unexpected from such an interesting and important personage. She had already in her own mind (having heard early in the morning of the removal of his incognito) settled that he was to accept the office of president of the Ladies' Missionary Society, to become patron of the National Schools, to revive a dropped subscription of the old General of five pounds five shillings annually to the Benevolent Society, to undertake to support Lady Sudborne in holding a stall at the next bazaar, and to place himself in confidential communication with her, Miss Mabel, on all the important questions of the Hawkstone charitable and religious associations. She had almost pledged herself to lay before him at the first opportunity the papers of the Rome Missionary and Papal Conversion Plan. But Mabel was a person prudent in her zeal, and resolved for the present to withhold any communication on this subject until

she had discovered whether, what she sadly feared, Villiers was an Oxford man. "An Oxford man" was Mabel's expression; for Mr. Bevan had long since warned her against the vulgar use of the other epithet applied to the opinions which all men who support the Church are supposed to hold.

Her agreeable feelings were not at all diminished by the frank, kind, and, at the same time, the respectful way in which Villiers apologised for his intrusion; for Charles Bevan had already explained to him Mabel's character. And whatever opinion Villiers might entertain of the soundness of her views, or of the expediency of her mode of carrying them into effect, he could not but esteem and be disposed to like her.

"Never," he said to Bevan as they came to the door, "never ridicule individuals who are endeavouring zealously and honestly to do good, though in a wrong way, until they have been shown, and refused to follow, the right way. This way our Church of late years has failed to point out; and I admire the earnestness and the motives of those who, without her aid, are striving to do good, far more than I condemn their mistakes, or excuse that inactivity on our part, which is the real cause of all the mischief. Teach them the right way, and where there is honesty and zeal we shall have all their exertions with us."

Bevan agreed, but he felt also that there was a little rebuke contained in the words; for he was himself inclined, though not ill-naturedly, to laugh at individuals as well as at opinions which he did not approve of, and to amuse himself with Mabel's inconsistencies rather more than was quite agreeable to that lady's feelings. Villiers, older in mind, and sobered down by trials, never laughed at any one.

"I am come," said Villiers, after the usual introduction, "to request some information from you, as the person most acquainted with the subject, respecting the state of the schools in Hawkstone. I want to place a poor boy at one; and both Mr. Atkinson and my friend Bevan assure me that I cannot apply for advice to any one so well as to Miss Brook." Mabel inclined her head with dignity, and begged they would be seated.

"I believe I may venture to guess," she said, "at the object of your bounty"—for she had heard as much from Mrs. Connell; and however well bred, she could scarcely resist the temptation of bestowing her eulogistic patronage on so distinguished a person.

"Mr. Villiers must be aware of the admiration which we have all felt for the heroism with which he rescued the poor boy from his frightful danger."

Villiers smiled; and acknowledged that he was desirous of putting Connell's boy into some good school. He had found him sadly neglected, apparently accustomed to very bad company, as might indeed be imagined. "But there is something about him," he said, "which has singularly interested me—an extraordinary likeness. And it will be sad if the hand of Providence has saved him from an early death, only to make him criminal and miserable in after-life."

Mabel gravely assented; and with a little conscious importance she proceeded to turn over papers, and tickets, and little piles of bills, and an assortment of flannels and gingham which had just arrived for the choice of the Dorcas Society.

"My list of schools," she said, "is rather long. There is of course the National School, and the Grey School, and the Bluecoat School, and Mr. Elton's Academy for young gentlemen, and Mr. Dawson's Seminary, and the Establishment at the

top of the High Street, and Mr. Polewell's Commercial Gymnasium. But I wished particularly to find out a paper (I dare say you have seen it in the shop-windows) — but it was for to-morrow — a grand public examination of the boys at the New National Athenæum and Polytechnic Lyceum — quite a new thing for Hawkstone. The plan has been tried in London, and succeeded admirably. Government have assisted us here; and Dr. Bray, the celebrated Dr. Bray, the secretary to the parent institution in London, has come down. And Mrs. Maddox takes great interest in it. Indeed, it seems as if it would quite work a revolution in our system of education — so easy, and yet so comprehensive."

"Pray," said Bevan, "my dear Miss Brook, do not trouble yourself on my account, for I know the paper by heart. It has been before my eyes every day during the last week. There was a syllabus of the subjects of examination in it, was there not?"

"Oh dear, yes," said Miss Brook. "But you are laughing, as you always are," she continued, as she looked up and caught a smile on Bevan's lips.

Villiers also smiled, but it was a grave smile, with no tinge of sarcasm.

"Why, will you charge me with laughing," said Bevan, "when I am by far the gravest person in Hawkstone? Besides, I can show you that I am serious. Did not the summary of the last examination run in this way:—Analysis of physical sciences — causes, properties, affinities, attractions, energies; *Fire* — ignition, combustion, flame, caloric; *Water* — decomposition, fluidity, solidity; electricity, magnetism, atmospheric gases, space, motion; new theory as explanatory of — horizontal, ascending, descending, reflected, pendulous, rolling, diagonal, rotary, and planetary motion; recapitulation of moral principles, concluding with rhetoric, ethics,

geology, pneumatics, astronomy, metaphysics, moral cosmogony, politics, botany, chemistry, history, ancient and modern, poetry, manufactures, agriculture, mnemonics, horsemanship, dancing, arithmetic, geometry, cookery, the art of swimming, painting, sculpture, anatomy, music, ontology, and deontology?"

"Stop, stop!" cried Mabel; "all the latter part is your own invention."

"My own invention!" said Bevan. "You know that every one of these was contained in the paper, though they might not all have come together in one clause."

"But you are laughing at it," insisted Mabel.

"Mr. Villiers," said Bevan, "saw the paper himself; and we both read it together."

"I hope Mr. Villiers will not suffer himself to be corrupted by your sad new notions," said Mabel, partly in sober sadness, and partly in curious inquiry as to the state of Villiers's principles.

Villiers only bowed, and smiled again.

"I ought not," he said, "to trespass on your time, which I know is so fully occupied; but my friend Bevan told me that you could give me information generally on the state of the schools and education in Hawkstone. Connected as I am with it, and hoping soon to be a resident in the neighbourhood, and to take an interest in its welfare, I am naturally desirous to ascertain the state of its population and its principal wants."

Mabel was delighted; it was the very thing which she had anticipated—evidently an overture to her accepting the office of head almoner, and prime minister of charities to Villiers himself. And once more commencing an ineffectual search among papers, and linen, and work-baskets (for Mabel had a work-basket, though she had no time to use it), she

was obliged at last to abandon the task, and resuming an erect and important secretarial posture, with pen and ink before her — “Mr. Villiers,” she said, “would probably like that I should begin at the beginning. He” (with a stress upon the word) “will, I am sure, be rejoiced to know that we have established an infant school lately, and have seventy children in it already.”

“What a frightfully large family!” said Bevan; “and all orphans too!”

“Orphans!” said Mabel; “no, not orphans. I think Betsy Hatchett is the only one that has lost her mother. Oh, yes! there is Jane Jobson; but I do not recollect any other. How could you think they were orphans?”

“I thought,” said Bevan, “you and Miss Atkins, the schoolmistress, had undertaken the care and education of them?”

“And so we have,” said Mabel; “but that does not make them orphans. Their parents are alive for all that.”

“Did you buy them?” asked Bevan, gravely.

“Buy them! What can you mean?”

“I mean, did their parents sell them to you? How did you come into possession of them?”

“Possession of them!” said Mabel. “How I wish, Mr. Villiers, you would teach Mr. Bevan not to be so sarcastic!”

“I am not sarcastic,” said Bevan; “I am speaking seriously. Suppose some morning a policeman were to come into my room, and find me busy in teaching tricks to your little dog there” (for Mabel did indulge in the luxury of a pug dog), “and encouraging it to come to me at all hours, and to follow me, and not you, when I called it—taking care of it, in fact, and educating it in an infant dog’s school; and when he looked at the collar round the

neck, suppose he found it marked, not with my name, but Miss Mabel Brook's, with a charge to return it to the owner if lost ; — do you not think he might fairly ask me how I came into possession of the little animal, and whether I had bought it ? ”

“ Little animal ! ” said Mabel. “ It's such a beauty ; only look at its tail ! Is it not a beauty, Mr. Villiers ? ” And Villiers was obliged to stoop down and pat the little monster ; but he did not say it was a beauty, for he never said what he did not think.

“ I hope the poor little thing will never fall into your hands,” said Mabel, taking it up and fondling it.

“ And why not ? ” said Bevan.

“ Because you would not know how to take care of it, in the first place ; then, you would never love it as I do ; and, I am sure, it would never love you.”

“ Not if I taught it tricks,” said Bevan, “ and made it stand upon its hind legs and put out its paw, and perhaps spell a word or two with letters on the ground ? You know there have been reading pigs ; and why not a reading dog ? I can't tell you how many tricks I know which I could teach it — to jump up when bidden, and to wag its tail, and toss up a bit of biscuit from its nose and catch it in its mouth, and to ring the bell. In short, it might learn any thing, and become quite an accomplished dog, highly educated and enlightened, even for these days.”

“ I do not think,” said Mabel, “ that teaching a dog tricks is the way to make him love you. It is feeding it, nursing it, having it with you, taking it out on your walks, keeping it constantly with you in your room, talking to it, as I talk to my little pet. Don't I talk to you ? ” she said, stooping down

almost to kiss the dog. "When it looks up to you every day for its food and comfort, and knows no one's voice but yours, it will love you, and not before. I cannot tell you how my poor pet whines and moans when I am away from it, and how it bounds about and frisks when I return."

"But do let me try the experiment," said Bevan; "do let your dog come to me every day, and let me teach it some tricks."

"No, indeed!" said Mabel; "for if it did not love you, it would not obey you, or learn any thing from you, unless, indeed, you had recourse to a whip, which I could not bear; and if it did love you, why it would not love me. And I think it ought to love me, for I saved its life. There were some idle boys going to drown it, and I bought it of them, when quite a puppy, for a shilling; and therefore, as I gave it its life, I think I have a claim that it should love me; and it does love me very much." And the dog put out his tongue to lick her hand.

"I must confess," said Villiers, "that Miss Brook's theory of affection seems as sound as it is deep. It would scarcely be fair, perhaps, to ask if the fathers and mothers of the seventy infants entertain the same opinions?"

"I am afraid the fathers and mothers," said Mabel, not exactly understanding the drift of the question, but feeling that some mischief was contained in it, "I fear the fathers and mothers have no theory of affection, or of any thing. They are a most sad, ignorant, profligate set, who bring up their children to nothing but vice and idleness. These sad manufactories, Mr. Villiers, they have quite ruined Hawkstone. High wages to-day, and none to-morrow; and the children, as soon as they can earn a penny, sent to the factories, and the mothers the same; never at home by their own fire-

sides, so that if we did not step in, and take the care of the poor little children, I know not what would become of them. Not less than three infants have been burnt to death here, in their cradles, within the last eighteen months. And as soon as they begin to run about, they are allowed to play in the streets, where they hear and see all kinds of horrible things. Surely," she turned to Bevan, "you would not wish such a state of things to continue, though you do ridicule our infant school?"

"I must protest," said Bevan, "against such an insinuation, even from a lady's lips. I do not ridicule infant schools, and I do not wish such a state of things to continue. But whether infant schools are exactly the best means of remedying it, I may, perhaps, doubt."

"But what can you do?" said Mabel.

"Why, having objected," said Bevan, "to your plans, I think I am bound to produce my own; and I will therefore propound to you my theory—an Oxford theory, Miss Brook."

"Oh, no, no," cried Mabel; "I will hear nothing of your Oxford notions. I know what they will be; something about Popery, I am sure." And she looked inquiringly at Villiers, to see what impression was made on him by the word Oxford. But Villiers only smiled in his own quiet way, with a tinge of sadness in it.

"Shall I tell you a story, then?" said Bevan.

"Oh! by all means," said Mabel, "provided it is not about some Popish saint."

"No," said Bevan; "my story is about a doctor. There was, once upon a time, a doctor, who lived——"

"In the west of England, of course," interrupted Villiers, laughingly; "all heroes of tales, in this day, live in the west of England!"

"Yes," said Bevan, "in the west of England; and he was called in one day to see a poor man who had a mortification in his chest, and was evidently dying. And in the same village there lived a lady, one of the most benevolent of her sex, charitable beyond her means, president of five societies, secretary to five others, patroness and superintendent of the infant school; and I rather think," he added, glancing at the splendid diploma which lay open on the table, "that she was an honorary vice-president of the Grand Royal and National African——"

"Mr. Bevan, Mr. Bevan!" cried Mabel, half laughing and half offended, "I must not be caricatured in this way. You know you are joking at me."

"Pray," said Bevan, "allow me to finish my story. In the same village, then, with this doctor lived this lady, who, among her other charitable avocations, had taken much interest in the distressing state of the poor sick man; and one morning, about twelve o'clock, she called on the doctor, and was shown into his private room. 'Dr. Morris,' she said, 'I have called to speak of the state of poor Jackson. What is to become of him?' 'Madam,' said the doctor, 'I fear there is little hope; the disease is approaching the vitals: and unless we could expel it from thence, I see no chance of his recovery.' 'Well,' said the lady, 'I quite agree with you. But still something must be done. We cannot allow the poor man to go on in this way, without some effort to save him; and the nurse and I have just thought of two plans by which, at any rate, some good will be effected. You say the limbs and extremities are not affected yet.' 'No, madam,' replied Dr. Morris. 'Don't you think, then,' said the lady, 'it might be as well to save them, at least?' Dr. Morris seemed puzzled by the question.

‘Don’t you think,’ continued the lady, ‘you could cut off the arms and legs — amputate them, you know — and so they would be saved, at any rate; the disease could not get to them.’ Dr. Morris rose silently, and rung his bell. ‘Or else,’ said the lady, ‘the other plan nurse and I thought of was, without amputation, to apply a tourniquet to the limbs, so that the blood from the body might not flow into them, or only a very little now and then; and so it would not matter what became of the vitals, and the arms and legs would be kept quite sound, and we could employ them as we liked for any useful purposes of society.’ By this time the doctor’s bell was answered, and, with his assistant, approaching the lady, he begged her to keep herself quiet, persuaded her, under pretence of refreshment, to swallow a composing draught, and immediately sent for her friends, that she might be taken home under their care, and not to be allowed to escape again.”

“Not very complimentary, I must confess,” said Mabel, with an offended air. “But I do not see what this has to do with our infant school.”

“Will Miss Brook,” said Villiers, “allow me, whom she will not suspect of sarcasm, to interpret the allegory? I suppose Mr. Bevan thinks, and I confess I think with him, that parents and young children — very young children especially, and such as are admitted into infant schools — are as members of one body, drawing their life and support, and bound all to hang together from one common centre. Nature has so formed them, and we must deal with them accordingly. He meant, I imagine, to suggest, that either to save such children from the infection of corrupt parents by separating them wholly, or to attempt to save them from infection while they still continued in communication with

the vitals, was a futile attempt. I do not agree with him that the propounders of such a scheme should be committed to the care of their friends ; but I confess I do think the scheme itself is rather visionary."

"But," said Mabel, "we do not separate them wholly from their parents. They go home every night ; and are at home on the Sundays, and several hours in the day."

"And there," said Bevan, "if their homes are such as you represent, they must learn either from your example to despise their parents, or from their parents' example to despise you. And which do you think is more likely?"

"Yes," said Mabel ; "but then we stand to them in the place of parents. I teach them to look up to me as their mother ; and indeed I am sure they have the greatest affection and respect towards me, for they always courtesy when they meet me in the streets ; and one of them, quite a little one, worked me the other day such a nice pincushion ; indeed, I have had several. It is quite a pleasure to receive such little presents. I only gave sixpence to the first, who worked a sampler for me ; and no less than six girls have commenced doing the same thing. It shows their affection ;—and so young, too!"

"Seventy children!" muttered Bevan, "seventy children ! The last Shah of Persia had only sixty-four !" And he put his fingers to his lips, as if calculating a sum. "Pray," he said, "how is it that the mothers are obliged to send their children so young to school?"

"Because," answered Mabel, rather fretfully, "because they have so much to do. Many of them have large families, others have their work in the factories ; and it is impossible for one person to attend to all these things. You know you must

have an eye on children perpetually, or they get into such mischief."

"Have any of the mothers in Hawkstone," asked Bevan, "as many as seventy children?"

"How can you talk such nonsense?" said Mabel, becoming angry. "Poor things!" she continued, more placably, for she could not help laughing at Bevan's smile! "What would become either of parents or of children with such a family?"

"And what then is to become of you, Miss Brook, and of your seventy children? I have been shuddering at the thought of your fate ever since you avowed your condition."

"How you persist," said Mabel, reproachfully, "in taking every thing I say so literally. I do not mean," she said—and what she was about to say no one can tell, for she stopped short, and coloured, and laughed—"I mean, of course, that persons who undertake to educate children are their parents metaphorically; not exactly parents, you know, but in a figure."

"That is," said Bevan, "finding the parents unable to educate their children, you undertake to educate them instead."

"Exactly," said Mabel.

"And the parents give them up to you?"

"Yes."

"Wholly, or only in part?"

"Of course, only in part."

"And pray, what part is that?"

"Why, to teach them their lessons, and keep them in order, and all that," said Mabel.

"And you propose to teach them every thing that is good, and make them obedient, and dutiful, and religious, and every thing they ought to be. Is it not so?"

"Certainly," said Mabel, "we wish to make them good children."

"And pray, have the parents to teach them any thing else?"

"Why, yes—no—yes," said Mabel, hesitatingly. "No, I do not know that they have."

"And pray, do you find this an easy task? How do you set about it?" said Bevan. "For I assure you I have had some experience in education, and find it by no means easy to make persons good, particularly children. You whip them, of course?"

"I hope not," said Mabel, indignantly. "I trust all punishment of that kind is discarded with us. It is not fear that can make children good."

"Nor, I conclude," said Bevan, "do you find that learning their letters, or repeating their collects, or singing together 'the cat purrs—the cock crows—the dog barks—the pig grunts,' or jumping about like little Merry Andrews, clapping their hands, and pretending to be in play, till they yawn with sleepiness—you do not find, I suppose, that this assists much in forming them to virtue?"

"Of course not," said Mabel, angrily. "We make them good by their love and affection to us; we wish them to respect us, and be grateful to us, and do every thing we bid them, for our sake."

"For your sake, and Miss Atkins'?" asked Bevan, half afraid lest he should offend her too much by his playful interrogatories.

"Not exactly ours only," said Mabel, "but for the sake of the subscribers generally, and all the ladies who have helped to establish the school."

"And whom they see," said Bevan, "once a month! Is once a month time enough for children to learn to love persons?" he asked.

"Why will you continue to take my words so literally?" said Mabel. "I only meant to say that

we endeavour to make the children do right by enforcing their duty to us, and exciting their affection and gratitude to us."

"And I know no means but affection and gratitude," said Villiers, kindly, coming to her support, "which can be efficacious, humanly speaking, in education. Miss Brook will find me on her side."

And Mabel was soothed and pleased with his approbation.

"Suppose, then," continued Bevan (and Mabel affected to stop her ears, saying, she would not listen to any more of his suppositions—they were all equally bad); but Bevan persevered—"suppose, my dear Miss Brook, some fine morning, these seventy children were to come to your door, telling you that they had learned to love you very much, and to respect you, and, as is naturally the case with the affections of all young people, that they now cared little for any one else; and did not like their parents, who treated them harshly, and were bad people, nor their homes, which were not half as clean and airy as the school-room; and that you had told them you would be a mother to them; and that they loved you much better than their real mother, and would do anything you bade them—pray, should you not be taken a little by surprise?"

"Indeed I should," said Mabel; "and my first orders would be, to go back to their parents, and to honour their father and their mother; and to remember that I was only their teacher, and not to be regarded by them in the place of a real parent."

"Only a metaphorical one," said Bevan, laughing.

"I do not like sarcasm," said Mabel, gravely.

"Will you let me tell you the sequel, then, of the story of the doctor?" asked Bevan.

"No, indeed, I do not wish to hear any more."

“But I must, indeed,” continued Bevan; “Mr. Villiers told it me himself.”

“Oh, Mr. Villiers!” cried Mabel, “I did hope to have had your support; but I am afraid you are corrupted also with these sad Oxford notions.”

Villiers only smiled, and shook his head.

“I must tell you the sequel,” said Bevan. “The day afterwards, the same lady (for she had made her escape by a side door) called again on the doctor, and informed him that she had taken into consideration the difficulty of preserving the limbs from corruption, in case they were amputated; and that she had a remedy which would remove this objection. She had spoken to another man, who had consented to have the limbs, when cut off, fastened on to his own body. ‘And you know,’ said the lady, ‘that they may be fastened on quite tightly—sewed on, in fact; and if they cannot be kept alive without being attached to some body or other, why this will do; and so they will still have a body to supply them with nutriment and life, and to direct their movements.’ It will be as good as their original body, metaphorically, you know,” said Bevan, archly.

Mabel was silent, and almost inclined to be seriously indignant. “I am no philosopher, you are aware, Mr. Bevan,” she said; “but I only know that the infant schools have been established by some of the most religious and good men who ever lived; and I do think we should exert ourselves to save these poor infants from being led astray and ruined by the example of their parents.”

“I am sure,” said Villiers, as a pacificator, “that Mr. Bevan will join with you most cordially in this opinion; and so we must all.”

“Most cordially,” said Bevan; and he stretched out his hand across the table in token of an ami-

cable capitulation,—most cordially; only,” he continued, as he took Mabel’s hand, which was very reluctantly given him, and lay passively in his own —“only, I must tell you one more story.”

Villiers could not help laughing at his pertinacity.

“There was once on a time,” said Bevan—

“Indeed, indeed,” cried Mabel, “I cannot stop to hear any more stories; I have heard quite enough: but Mr. Villiers will excuse me, I am sure. I am obliged to attend a meeting of the Dispensary Committee at one o’clock; and, instead of giving him any information respecting the schools, we have wasted all the time in hearing Mr. Bevan’s sarcasms.”

“Stop, I entreat you!” said Bevan, “one moment; you must stop, only one more. There was once upon a time a gentleman, and he lived ——”

“In the west of England?” asked Villiers again.

“No, not in the west of England, this time,” answered Bevan, “but at Bagdad; and this gentleman was very fond of young animals of all kinds; and one day they brought him a young lion (it is true, indeed—perfectly true), which they had found in the reeds on the banks of the Tigris; it was not much larger than a cat—quite an infant, Miss Brook. The gentleman took compassion on the poor little creature, and was particularly desirous to rear it up in good sound principles—very different principles, indeed, from those of its father and mother, who were wandering about the desert sheep-stealing and horse-stealing, and exceedingly fond of raw flesh. He thought the best way to accomplish this would be to place himself to it in the place of a parent—not a real parent, you know, only a metaphorical one. And as he had no mamma lioness to give it suck, he constructed a large

leathern bag, with which he endeavoured to supply the little monster with food after its natural fashion. The gentleman, as I said before, was particularly anxious to extinguish its taste for animal food, and hoped that by proper tenderness and management, especially by teaching it to stand upright on its hind legs, and to pick out the letters of the alphabet, this horrible taste would be extirpated, and that it would learn to live on milk and vegetables. It was, indeed, allowed every night, and once or twice in the day, to be in company with another grown-up lion and lioness, who were kept in a cage, and fed with raw meat, which the young one, at those times, was allowed to partake of: but this the gentleman did not mind. His reliance was placed on the leathern bag and the letters of the alphabet. And the young lion grew, and the old gentleman continued to pet it and feed it with his own hand and the leathern bag; and when the Pasha, who knew more of lions than the gentleman, warned him that it was not so easy a thing to wean them to live upon potatoes and turnips, the gentleman still replied that his lion could tell the letters of the alphabet, and would, therefore, soon lose its taste for blood. And at last the lion became as large as a young donkey, and could tell every single letter correctly, and the gentleman was quite proud of his success; when, one morning, it was found in its master's room, amusing itself with the remnants of its master's skull!"

"How horrible!" cried Mabel. "What can you mean by such stories?"

"I mean," said Bevan to Villiers, as they went down stairs after taking their leave, and promising to call for more information again—"I mean that we in this country are endeavouring to nurse an infant monster in the shape of the children of those

classes which we have permitted to grow up in vice, and ignorance, and poverty, and who are now beginning to alarm us with their menaces and strength; and that if we have nothing better to crush the instinct which it derives from its parents, ‘*ἔθος τὸ πρὸς τοκέων*’—you remember the passage in *Æschylus*—than our leathern bag and our letters of the alphabet—Woe to us when the child grows up!”

Villiers was silent; for it was a thought not new to him, but full of fear and sorrow.

“And yet you must not,” he said, “indulge your humour too much with Miss Brook; you will give her offence and pain her. And she is far too amiable a person to treat with disrespect.”

“Disrespect!” said Bevan, “I would not offend her for the world! But she is under the influence of the absurdities of the day. And ought we not to be reminded that infants have been placed by Providence in the hands of their parents, and belong to them as their property? That except by parents, or persons fulfilling all the duties and occupying the position of parents, they cannot be properly educated; because the education of infants can only be conducted through love and veneration; and their love and veneration, if directed to any one but their parents, is misplaced, and will only lead to a dislocation of the first elements of society—domestic attachment?”

“It is true,” said Villiers.

“And will our education,” continued Bevan, “be placed on a proper footing until we give up our usurped authority over the infants of the poor, restore them to the hands of their parents, stand by them ourselves only to aid and assist the parents in the work of education, and turn our attention rather to improve the parent than the child, rather to make the vitals of society sound, and the spring of

life pure, than to save the limbs while the vitals are mortifying, and to filter the waters of the stream while the cattle are every hour polluting the fountain-head above?"

Villiers sighed. "I fear," he said, "we have rather trespassed on Miss Brook to-day. And certainly the course of conversation led us away from our object. Will you call with me again to-morrow?"

"With pleasure; and afterwards shall we go to see that quack exhibition, the Academy, or Lyceum, or whatever other fine name it bears? You observe how classical and Athenian everything is becoming, at the very time while the same parties, who thus nickname their modern absurdities, repudiate the notion of encouraging Latin or Greek, and talk of nothing but modern science and utility."

"I am not very fond," said Villiers, "of appearing as a spectator at exhibitions the principle of which I disapprove of. But wishing, as I do, to see as much as possible of the state of things in Hawkstone, I will depart from my general rule. And now are you disposed for a walk? And you shall tell me what is the condition of the place in your own mind. Which way shall we proceed?"

"I have one favourite walk," said Bevan—"towards the Priory ruins, if you have no objection. And I wish to see a poor person on the road."

"None," said Villiers. And the two friends (for the morning conversation, in exhibiting a similarity of principle and object, had done more than renew an old acquaintance) commenced their walk to the ruins.

CHAPTER III.

"AND all this is yours?" said Bevan to Villiers, as they stood together on the same brow where Villiers had rested before on his former visit to the Priory.

Villiers made no reply, for he seemed immersed in thought.

"It is a lovely prospect!" continued Bevan, not noticing his companion's abstraction. "Look how beautifully the light is falling on that gable with the ivy drooping down from the broken tracery. See, it is stealing round that pillar, and throwing it out from the shadow. Oh! is not that exquisite?" And he quite clapped his hands (for Bevan was an enthusiastic admirer of Nature) as a cloud passed away, and a gorgeous light fell on the mass of foliage and old gnarled trunks of oaks, which started out of the red sandstone rock on the bank behind the ruins. "And the rush of that water!" he exclaimed; "can anything be more soothing and delicious? But you do not enjoy it!"

"I should enjoy it more," replied Villiers, "if it belonged to any one but myself. Neither of us indeed would perhaps regard the ruins of a religious house as the most agreeable object for enjoyment, however picturesque they may be. But men's minds do not seem to contemplate things now in such points of view. A ruin is a ruin, whatever its original destination; and break it up into picturesque groupings, tint it well with lichens, hang it with ivy, and place it in a good framework of wood and valley, and the eye once satisfied, no one seems to care for anything

else. I confess I cannot do this. And I do not enjoy the sight of those ruins, for the very reason that they are my own."

"And yet property," said Bevan, "has its charms and its uses, if properly employed."

"It has," said Villiers; "and yet the burthen of it is heavy. When you reminded me that all this was mine, I thought of a Being who said the same of this, and of all the kingdoms of the world—'All this is mine, and I give them to whomsoever I will.' I have sometimes wished that Providence had placed me where you are placed, in the quiet independence of a college life."

"Our college life," said Bevan, "has many charms. It relieves us from all the troubles and anxieties of an establishment, gives us a home without many of the discomforts connected with a family, and secures us a degree of respectability independent of fortune, which is useful to ourselves, and also, I think, to society, in these days, when money is everything."

Villiers looked disappointed, and scanned Bevan inquiringly; and one who knew the workings of his countenance might have observed a slight, very slight curl of the upper lip. "I thought," he said, "that Oxford men sometimes gave other reasons for their attachment to Oxford?"

"What more would you want?" asked Bevan, sedately. "Ease, comfort, independence, respectability, usefulness to society,—where could you have learnt that anything more was necessary? Surely not from this age?"

Villiers, plain, straightforward, never speaking except exactly as he felt and thought, and never indulging even in the most moderated irony, still seemed perplexed. And Bevan perceived and understood his thoughts.

“ You wish me,” he said, “ to speak of other blessings which we enjoy at Oxford. Do not suppose that I am insensible to them; but they are things rather to be known and felt, and acted on, than talked of.”

“ Yes, said Villiers; “ your daily service, the society of good men, your time for study, your noble associations, the freedom from temptation, the space you occupy in the country, as fulfilling its noblest duties, your defence of the Church, and of all that the Church values—these are the things which I was thinking of. Oxford has long seemed to me the Thermopylæ of the age. And when the barbarous host pours down upon us with their gold, and tumult, and jargon, and parade, it is there that the few must take their stand who dare to resist the invader. Whether they will be overwhelmed or not, is in the hands of Providence.”

“ And yet,” said Bevan, “ Oxford is not all that it should be. It has improved, has been raised from the lamentable state in which it lay not long since, but it has many defects. The very enjoyment of its life tends to make us indolent and selfish, and unable to bear with the little frettings and roughnesses of life. It makes us dreamers also, inclined to indulge in theories of what should be, rather than to grapple manfully with evils as they are. We have too few duties. Except those who are immediately engaged in tuition, and the care of the neighbouring parishes (and they are comparatively few), we have no appointed work, except to study; and study by itself, without active duties and occupations to form a solid foundation for it in the mind, is perhaps an unhealthy employment. The consequence is, that so few Fellows of Colleges reside at Oxford; and even those who would wish to enforce their residence scarcely venture to do so.”

"And why?" asked Villiers.

"They dread," said Bevan, "bringing a large number of persons to live constantly together, who, having nothing to do but to read, will probably become troublesome, restless, and even quarrelsome."

"But why not," said Villiers, "engage them all in tuition—allot to them each some portion of the management of the students?"

"We cannot," said Bevan, "without diminishing the emoluments of our tutorships; and, these diminished, we should not find superior men to devote themselves to the drudgery of tuition. Besides which, I doubt if we have discipline sufficient, and habits of obedience, to hold together a body of Fellows, each in his allotted place. Our societies are kept together in much harmony and good will, because few are in residence at a time; and among those it is effected by a gentlemanly spirit of mutual accommodation, and by the general habits of society, rather than by strict discipline. This is one of the things lost in our day, and perhaps it can never be recovered."

"Perhaps not," replied Villiers.

"Indeed it would be hard," continued Bevan, "to find men who would devote themselves, as the work of their whole life, to the task of education in a college, with only the trifling remuneration which could be offered them under your plan. Few men now think of dying in a college. Perhaps, as I said before, the life itself is enervating, and disqualifies us for our task, if continued too long."

"And therefore," said Villiers, smiling, "you no sooner obtain a fellowship than you look out for a living, and resolve to marry?"

"We look out, I believe," replied Bevan, "for a position where we may have regular and active

duties to discharge, particularly as clergymen. I have heard many Fellows, as soon as they were ordained, express themselves strongly, and I do believe honestly, as if they felt that a residence in Oxford, enjoyable as it is, was incompatible with their ordination vow."

"And yet they are needed there, surely," said Villiers, "to provide learning for the Church, and to defend it by their writings: even to hold up a high standard of principle and theory, as well as of conduct, which is so soon lost in the bustle of the world."

"Yes," said Bevan, "if any one would come forward and appoint us our tasks, and make us feel that we are following this as our proper vocation, fixed by Providence. But we have not been accustomed to look at our institutions in this point of view. And after all, until we have all our active duties and employments, as well as our opportunities for study, I fear the attempt would fail."

"And so, as soon as you can leave Oxford, you all marry?" repeated Villiers. And there was something in his tone of voice as if he was sounding the depth of his companion's mind.

"We marry," said Bevan, "for what else can we do? You would not wish a clergyman to place himself in a parish alone, without any one to relieve the solitude of his fireside when he comes home from his painful, and wearying, and thankless ministrations? As a single man he commands no station in society; he cannot attend to many things which only a lady can properly superintend. He must be embarrassed, to say the least, with his domestic arrangements. But there are also numberless parochial employments in which he cannot well take the lead, but his wife may. In the present state of society to be married is, at least, as indispensable to

a parochial clergyman as it is to a member of any other profession, who is never recognised as fixed respectably in life, or even usefully, till he is married."

"And with the marriage," said Villiers, still probing the real opinions of his companion, "with the marriage comes the establishment, and with the establishment the house and the furniture, and the hundred knicknacks of our modern refinement, and the footboy in livery, and the pony-chaise, and the respectable table, and the spare room for occasional visitors; perhaps the piano and the harp, for you are gentlemen yourselves, and those you marry have themselves been brought up to these comforts; and the position which you occupy in the parish, or the town, requires that you should live respectably, and respectability, in modern eyes, is determined by the——"

"Horse and gig, you would say," interrupted Bevan.

"No," said Villiers, for he was fastidiously alive to vulgarities, and could never enter into the wit of slang, "by these comforts and refinements."

"It is too true," assented Bevan.

"And then," continued Villiers, "when the school-house is to be built, and the church enlarged, and the organ fitted up, and the schoolmaster paid, and the poor relieved, without being sent to the workhouse, and the out-lying districts to be provided with additional curates and chapels, the clergyman is drained of his own means by his own necessities, and must look to bazaars and penny-subscriptions, and all the precarious mockeries of modern charity, to provide for the wants of his church; and after all, provide for them ineffectually."

"Remember one thing," said Bevan. "If your

present system involves a large expenditure by clergymen on their own families, it provides also the funds from private sources; for so long as the parochial clergy retain their present respectability (let us use the word as the world uses it), so long the situation will be filled by respectable men; that is, by men who have private property of their own, and increase it by the little fortunes of the persons whom they marry. But lower them down to a style of living and position in society which, however good, and simple, and primitive in itself, would be wholly unintelligible, and without claims to respect in modern eyes, and our clergy would soon be filled only from the lowest classes."

"I am not sure," said Villiers, "whether the funds brought into the Church in the way you suggest are at all equivalent to the increased expenditure of the clergy, entailed on them by their present mode of life; and perhaps a different mode of life might provide for them other resources which are now closed up; and private bounties to the Church might flow more liberally, as they did of old, when men saw that their gifts were not expended in private, but in public works. But you mistake me if you suppose I would sweep away our parochial system, as it now stands, further than that I would willingly see our clergy, within proper limits, and gradually, setting the example of more simplicity in their habits of living; and from them it would penetrate into other classes of society. But I do think that on our Church system, as constituted at present, something else might be grafted to supply its present defects. We do require collegiate bodies, and without them our Church will be scarcely able to retain her position."

"Monasteries," said Bevan, archly.

"No, not monasteries," replied Villiers; "far from it!"

“And why not monasteries?” asked Bevan, looking up into Villiers’s face with an expression of curiosity and interest; “why not monasteries?”

“It would be more fit,” answered Villiers, “for me to ask you, the learned man of Hawkstone, the history of monasteries, than for you to ask me. But I have read that history carefully; and I trust the days of monasteries will not be revived in England.”

“And yet,” said Bevan, “think what monasteries have effected in their generation. How they opened a refuge for the scattered atoms of society, the men without homes or families, and who, without homes or families, could become only useless, if not mischievous—how they preserved in the world the form, at least, of a higher tone of piety and self-denial—how they exhibited, to common eyes, religion and the Church in a tangible shape, visible and powerful, and clothed with all the outward ornaments so necessary to give it weight, and even to make it intelligible to minds that can comprehend nothing but sense.”

“I have thought of all this,” said Villiers.

“Again,” continued Bevan, “remember how they stood between the Church and the crown at the time when the ecclesiastical power without this support must have been crushed by the secular arm—how again they stood between the crown and the barons, and aided the former in amalgamating the civil elements of society, and in forming oligarchies into monarchies: think again how they stood once more between the barons and the people, and threw up their great corporations, strong in property and talent, to protect the people from the tyranny of their masters—to set an example of kindness and good management—to introduce arts and refinement, and a refinement not like our own,

divested of religion, but turning all the energies of the fancy to embody and illustrate, and enforce the doctrines of truth."

"I know it all," repeated Villiers, gravely.

"And to our monasteries," continued Bevan, "we owed our libraries, our churches, our cathedrals, our architecture, painting, sculpture, agriculture, music, — even our ecclesiastical endowments and our parochial system, — how much of all that sweetens as well as ennobles life!"

"With some qualifications," said Villiers, "I admit it."

"And," continued Bevan, sarcastically, "when our monasteries were swept away, came our poor laws."

"Yes," said Villiers, with a strong expression of indignation.

"And for our monasteries," added Bevan, "we have now ——"

"Yes," cried Villiers, impetuously, "we have our factories and our poor-houses, where, night and day,

'Men wake as monks of old, but not for prayer —
Men quail with famine's pangs, but not for God —
Men crush their limbs with toil, but all for gold —
Men live and die in shame, but not for sin.'

"O England! England!" And Villiers drew his hat over his brow and walked on hurriedly.

Bevan followed him in silence, and they both sat down together on the trunk of a huge oak, which had been uprooted in a late storm, and lay along the side of the declivity.

"And yet," said Bevan, gently, "with all this before you, you would not restore our monasteries?"

"No," said Villiers, "I would not. From the first they seem to me to have been formed upon

false principles, and to have been the strongholds of Popery ; and of Popery, if I venture to speak at all, it can be only with abhorrence."

Bevan was struck and surprised. He might have expected some expression of sorrow and reprobation for the corruptions of Popery ; but he was little used to language of this kind from any one except persons very different from Villiers. And the warmth with which Villiers spoke when roused contrasted strongly with the usual reserve and quietness of his manner. But Villiers, sobered as he had been by trials, was still a man of quick and almost passionate feeling ; and without feeling, who can move or rule the world ?

"I abhor," he said, standing up with his arms folded on his breast, and looking steadfastly on Bevan—"I abhor a system which, professing a zeal for religion, aims mainly at dominion — which destroys the constitution of the Church, and with the constitution, its safeguard for the transmission of truth, in order to raise up a tyranny where God has appointed equality—which pretends to antiquity and authority, while it forges and falsifies the documents on which those pretensions are rested — which abandoning its simple duty of witnessing to the truth revealed to it, thinks only of governing men—which, to govern men, consents to employ trickeries, and falsehoods, and mummeries—which would hold them in ignorance and bondage, lest enlightenment in the laity should infringe on the exclusive usurpation of the clergy — which would sever all the ties of society, separating children from their parents, and husbands from their wives, and subjects from their kings, and kings from their subjects, and rather create a chaos than want a field fitly prepared for spreading its own dominion. I abhor," he continued, "that which you abhor, its frightful popular idolatries — the au-

dacity with which it has tampered with the most solemn positive institutions of God — the wretched, compromising, expediency-rationalism with which it has made itself all things to all men, that it may win, not souls, but bodies — the laxity of its morals set side by side with the severity of its discipline — the grasping, meddling, covetous, ay, sanguinary spirit with which it has stretched its arm over the whole world, introducing schism, and heresy, and rebellion, and murder as the means of propagating religion, that is, of establishing its own power. And when I speak of such things," said Villiers, "I speak strongly; and we ought to speak strongly."

"And yet," said Bevan calmly, "placed by the side of dissent, Popery has its fair side. Even compared with our own Church it has much to admire and imitate."

"Not Popery," said Villiers; "not Popery. Popery is the spirit of rule, of ambition, of self-will, of rationalism, of dissent itself; and as such, it has nothing fair. To serve its ambition, it has made use of religion, and preserved much that is noble and good, because it knows that without nobleness and goodness no rule can long be permanent. And it is this Catholicism, not Popery, which we admire."

"It is sad," said Bevan, "that in our own Church we have not something of this spirit of rule, some of that worldly prudence which would restore our discipline and our power."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Villiers. "God forbid!" He was thinking solemnly on a solemn subject, or the expression would not have escaped him. "Better any weakness in the Church, than a scheming, manœuvring, grasping spirit to get possession of men's minds, and then of their bodies, and then of their wealth, for one lust will follow on the

other. Our Church has indeed its faults, but they are faults of individuals, not of the system. Popery sins rather in its system, and its virtues are exceptions, and individual."

"Are you not too harsh in your judgment?" said Bevan.

"And violent, you think," said Villiers. "Every one, now, who feels strongly, or speaks strongly, is thought violent. And perhaps," he continued, calmly, and smiling at his own earnestness, "moderation is always best; but I have seen Popery, and know its workings, which those who speak of it with quietness have rarely done."

"And you, then," said Bevan, "are not one of those who would rebuild these ruins? You ought rather to look on them complacently. Does it not delight you," he said, as they entered under the gateway of the outer court, "to see this old corbel tottering to its fall, and the rents in that stone roof?"

Villiers did not answer; for he was examining the structure with a curious eye, pacing and repacing the gateway to measure its length, and searching in a heap of rubbish overgrown with nettles for part of the carved groining which had fallen down.

"Observe," he said, as they entered the inner court, "how well they arranged their buildings. The chapel, or rather church, occupying the most prominent place, vast, elevated, and ornamented, as the centre and object of the whole cluster of buildings. Then the refectory, which stood where that large oriel window is hanging—just there. You see the low stone pillars of a crypt under it, which, in fact, formed the kitchen and the cellars: and all the buildings round—dormitories, offices, and all, were left low, and almost insignificant. That which be-

longed to God was first and foremost, that which belonged to man in society was next, that which belonged to the individual was last and lowest. And now our houses are palaces, and our churches are barns."

"Our club-houses, at least," said Bevan, laughingly, "are an exception. They represent man in society, and are splendid enough to represent him as he should be in that capacity."

"Yes," said Villiers, "but it is a society of selfishness; merely an aggregation of individuals, with no bond to hold them together but their own self-indulgence."

They stood now within the roofless chapel; and Villiers uncovered his head, and Bevan likewise. "Hark!" said Bevan, "what noise was that?"

"I heard nothing but the brook rushing," said Villiers.

"Yes! there again," said Bevan; "surely there was a noise up there." And he pointed to an old narrow archway, high up in the wall, against the east end of the chapel, and close above the iron grated door which led into the Villiers's vault. Villiers's thoughts were full of other things.

"It is too early in the day for ghosts," said Bevan; but Villiers, he perceived, had no relish for any thing approaching to a jest. And as he stood gazing on the iron grating, and then, as if recovering himself, proceeded once more to pace the chapel in its length and breadth, as if to take its measurements, Bevan passed out into the cloisters, and was examining the remains of the wall which had enclosed the Prior's garden. Villiers had just completed his survey, and was proceeding to clear away some nettles which had sprung up, and nearly hid an old Knight Templar's cross-legged figure, when Bevan appeared again at the arch of the cloister,

and beckoned him to come that way ; his hand was held up to motion to him not to make a noise, and Villiers walked towards him. "Look," said Bevan, with a low voice, as he turned the angle of the buttress, "look up in that corner, by that mass of ivy, under the window ; who can that be ? "

"It is a woman," said Villiers.

"And what can she be doing ? " said Bevan.

* * * * *

The church clock in Hawkstone had struck one on the night after Bentley had paid his calamitous visit to the Priory ruins. From a starry moonlight sky it had become overcast with clouds, and a heavy steady rain was pouring down ; while gusts of wind shook the far-scattered gas-lamps, and seemed ready to extinguish them. The streets were entirely deserted ; and, except the pattering of the rain, no sound had disturbed the sleepers in the High Street, except, about an hour before, a horse's sharp trot, coming in from the road to the forest. On the horse was mounted a respectably-dressed person, muffled up in a rough cloak, who, after taking his horse to a stable belonging to the Mason's Arms, and from thence passing by a private way into the little green door of the garden belonging to the Romish priest at Hawkstone, finally retired for the night to his lodgings at the post-office. A solitary policeman (for, with manufactures and minings, there had arrived at Hawkstone, also, the necessity of a police) stood at the corner of the street, with his iron-bound hat and glazed cape gleaming in the gas-light. He also, like Bevan in the ruins, was struck by hearing a noise ; but it was a noise very different from that of a clashing of iron ; it was one low deep moan, as of a person exhausted and yet in agony ; and then all was still again. The man stopped and listened, fancying it the wind ; and then to satisfy himself

he continued his patrol round the corner of King Street, till he came within three or four doors from the post-office. But here he stopped ; for, crouched up on the step of a door, and exposed to all the pelting of the rain, was a female figure. His first impression was to order her to go home. What business had she there at that time of night ? But the poor creature made no reply, and only continued to rock herself backwards and forwards, clasping at the same time to her breast what appeared to be an infant wrapped up in her mother's shawl.

"Go home, go home," said the policeman ; "what are you doing here ?"

And the poor thing opened her eyes, and catching sight of him, sprang up and fell down at his knees. "Don't strike me again — don't strike me again — do not murder me, George," she cried ; and then she lowered her voice to a whisper. "I won't tell — indeed, I won't."

"What's the matter ?" said the rough policeman ; "what's the meaning of this, woman ? who's going to murder you ?"

"I won't tell, indeed," she continued ; "it's all safe, only don't strike me : " and she clapped his knees, convulsively. "Any thing but that."

"Any thing but what ? Get up, my good woman," said the policeman, "get up." And he raised her up, made her relinquish her hold, and placed her on the step of the door. As the light from the lamp fell on the face of the policeman, she passed her thin wan hands over her eyes, and throwing back her hair from her young and beautiful face, she gazed wildly, as if to ascertain where she was. But all seemed to be a dream.

"Don't be frightened," said the kind-hearted, but blunt man. "I'm not going to do you any harm. I won't murder you."

She looked on him wistfully, and then, after a pause, she said, "Why not? I never did any thing for you. I never gave up all for you. Hah!" she cried, as she seemed to catch sight of and recognise his policeman's dress. And closing her lips firmly, as if resolved not to speak, she once more clasped her bundle to her breast, and seemed rocking her baby to sleep.

"What in the world is the matter with her?" said a second policeman, who had now come up.

"I suspect she's out of her senses," said the other.

Look at her clothes, all torn into shreds. She has evidently been through the woods; and her feet — there — one of her shoes is gone, and the other is all covered with blood."

"There's blood here, too," said the other; and he pointed out some large spots on the poor creature's tattered gown, together with some bits of mud, which had apparently been thrown at her.

"How came this?" said the second man, pointing to the mud, and trying to rouse her from her stupor by jogging her arm.

"They flung dirt at me," she said; "the boys flung at me. They called me bad names. But I am not bad — not now," she repeated, faintly. "I was once, but *he* tempted me." And she groaned deeply.

"What's the matter with you?" said the first man; "where are you hurt?"

She remained silent, and bit her lips.

"Where's your pain?" said the second, in a kinder voice, and trying to encourage her. She pressed her hand to her temple, where there were the marks of a contusion.

"Here," she said, "here — he struck me here. There's a great weight here, like lead. Please, sir, to take it off. I'm very ill."

"Are you cold?" said the policeman.

And she shook her head mournfully.

"Are you hungry?"

And again she shook her head.

"Arn't your feet sore?"

And she looked down to her feet, which were covered with blood, but once more shook her head.

"What can we do with her?" said the first policeman to the second. "I suppose we must take her to the station."

But before they could consult further, she sprang up, with a shriek which rang through the deserted street, and chilled their very blood. "Fire! fire! it's on fire. He's set it on fire. Oh, my brain!" And with both her hands clasped on the back of her head, she gave another piercing and horrible cry.

"What in the world is that? What's the matter? Oh, dear me, policeman, what can be the matter?" cried a voice out of a window, which had just opened a few doors below. It was Mrs. Jones, at the post-office.

"Only a poor woman," said the policeman, "not quite right in her mind."

"Oh, drive her away—pray, pray drive her away; do not let her stay here, for the world. What business has she here?"

"Do not be afraid," said the policeman; and as Mrs. Jones put up her window, he muttered a curse upon her for a hard-hearted fool. But another window opened, and another voice, that of a man, from the same house, demanded authoritatively, what was the meaning of such a noise in the streets at that time of night. It was Mr. Peters, or Pearce, or by what other *alias* he chose to pass. The same answer was given. And with something of an oath at the woman for disturbing his slumbers, Mr. Pearce told them to take her to the station; and,

closing his own window, retired again to rest. Alas! how little do people within the houses of a town think at night of those who are without!

"Wouldn't you like to go home, my good woman?" said the policeman.

"No, no," she murmured weakly, for, as if exhausted with pain, she had sunk once more on the step. "Not home, not home! He'll strike me again; and it would kill me. Oh, to be struck by him!"

"Who's him? Who struck you?" asked the second policeman, pertinaciously endeavouring to extract the facts, but ignorant of the mode of doing it, and becoming impatient. But once more she seemed to catch sight of his policeman's dress, and her lips were sealed. "He did not do it," she said, doggedly. "It's false. He never meant it. 'Twas all play. I know he did not mean it. Am not I his wife? Am not I his Margaret, that he used to love so—that gave up all for him? Yes—all, all!" And she groaned again bitterly. "He couldn't do it. Go away, go away," and she pushed the policeman from her. "Let me get up," she continued, as the man endeavoured to take hold of her, and lead her away. "Let me get up, I'm wanted." And she folded her dress about her, as if preparing to depart quietly. "My baby wants me. I have not given it its supper. I must go home."

"Why, what's this?" asked the policeman, trying to uncover the shawl which she had enveloped in her arms; "I thought this was your baby?"

The poor woman looked at him, as he withdrew fold after fold, but it was with a vacant stare. The shawl contained nothing but some straw, which she had apparently taken from a barn, and made up to hold in her arms like an infant.

"What's this?" asked the policeman, as he un-

covered it. And Margaret, letting her eyes wander idly from the bundle to the man, suffered it to fall from her arms with an expression of utter desolation.

"I'm not well," she said. "I don't think I'm quite right here," and she laid her forehead on her hands. "Things seem to go round with me. You won't hurt me, will you? I'm a poor woman."

"Hurt you!" said the policeman; "no, to be sure not. You had better come with us, and we'll put you into shelter. Here, take hold of my arm."

But once again she sprang up. "Hush!" she said, "it's crying for me; and I waiting here. It's cold. It wants me. Yes," she repeated, with a low voice, and shuddering all over, "it's cold — very cold where they laid it, and dark and lonesome. And the rain beats upon it. And I not there to keep it warm. Let me go, let me go," she screamed. "There's its cry again — my baby's cry!" And bursting, with all the strength of a maniac, from the hand of the policeman, she rushed along the street, turned down some alleys, which she appeared to thread familiarly, and was lost in the darkness of the night. What passed in the remainder of the night no one knew. A cottager, indeed, about two miles off, had been awakened, about four o'clock, by three frightful shrieks under his window; but he was too terrified and superstitious to rise and inquire what it meant. The under-keeper at the Priory also, in going his rounds early in the morning, had found a bonnet torn and dirtied, and under the bushes, in the same place, marks as if a person had lain there recently. And it was early in the afternoon when Villiers and Bevan reached the ruins.

"It is a poor woman," said Villiers, as he stood at the angle of the great north transept, looking at her.

"But observe," said Bevan, "she has no bonnet; her hair is all torn, her gown in tatters, and her feet without shoes, and swollen, and lacerated!"

She was, in fact, kneeling down on the wet grass, on a spot where the turf seemed recently to have been raised and replaced. And with part of the blade of a rusty knife, which she had picked up, she was digging out the earth with all her strength. Villiers and Bevan approached quietly without being perceived.

"I'm coming," she said, "I'm coming my own darling — wait a moment, I'm coming. Don't cry, for it kills me! He did not mean to hurt you. I know he did not. His own baby!"

And she continued to scabble up the mould with both her hands. "I'm coming, darling, darling! he shan't hurt you. Ah! ah!" And throwing down the knife, and stopping both her ears with her hands — "It's that scream!" she shrieked, — "its last scream!" And she sank shuddering to the ground, and lay as dead, with only a slight convulsive twitching of one hand, showing that she was still alive.

"Poor thing!" said Bevan, "what can we do with her?"

"We must take her to a cottage," said Villiers, "and then make inquiry for her friends. She can scarcely be a native of this place."

But Margaret heard their voices; and, turning up her delicate face, beautiful, even disfigured as it was, she was recognised by Bevan, who had, like Bentley and Villiers himself, seen her when they went to see Connell and the boy after the fire.

"What can be the meaning of this?" said Bevan. "It's poor Margaret Wheeler!"

"Margaret! Margaret!" she repeated, faintly. "Yes, he used to call me his own Margaret; but

that was when he loved me. Who are you? what do you want?" and she turned fiercely towards Bevan and Villiers. "What right have you here, spying out secrets? There are no secrets. He will kill you too. Go away, go away, I tell you. He has nothing to do with it. I did it. It was I — not he!"

"Did what?" asked Villiers, gently. But Margaret was again resting on her knees, with her face buried in her hands, and apparently hearing nothing.

"There is evidently something mysterious in this," said Bevan. "I wonder if we could find any trace of information. There is something here." And gently lifting her pocket without disturbing her, he took out of it a gold watch. "What can be the meaning of this?" said Bevan. — "Why this is Bentley's watch; here is his crest; I know it by the old fashioned chasing; it belonged to his aunt. He showed it me the other day as a curiosity."

"Singular!" said Villiers. "Take care of it. But let us first attend to this poor creature." And with a quiet soothing voice, he endeavoured to persuade her to get up and come with them.

"Oh! gentlemen," she said, "you are very kind, very good, if you would but help me. You see it's cold and wet; and I am its mother. There's no one else to take care of it. And they have smothered it; and I cannot get this off." And once more she began to scrabble up the mould. "Make haste! make haste! or it will die. It's crying for me!" she said; and she laid down her ear to the ground. "I'm coming, I'm coming, darling! Make haste!" And, with all her strength, and straining every nerve, she tried to remove the turf. "Help me, help me!" she cried; "help me, help me! I'm coming, darling — coming, coming!" And her

voice became fainter and fainter, and her movements more convulsive; and repeating the same words again and again, till they died on her lips, she sank down lifeless.

As the persons whom Bevan went to fetch were removing her to the keeper's cottage, which was the nearest place of shelter, Villiers looked back at the ruins from a little distance, and observed a man, who had emerged from the chapel, go hurriedly to the spot where Margaret had been found, and after hastily endeavouring to efface the marks which she had made, he looked round as if afraid to have been seen, and leaping across the brook, he struck off into the copse, and disappeared among the bushes.

"There is something in this which requires to be examined into," said Bevan.

"Yes; and we will do it to-morrow, but quietly," was Villiers's reply. "Never make a bustle; say nothing, and we shall unravel the mystery."

"I will go back," said Bevan, "and look at the spot, and then go into Hawkstone and see Mr. Bentley, while you wait till Mr. Morgan comes out."

He stopped at the keeper's cottage as he returned, and called Villiers out. He had found, on closer examination, that the ground had been trampled on as in a struggle. In one place was the mark of a man's knee on the wet clay, and the grass had been stained with something. Bevan almost feared to say what he thought it was. But the most alarming thing was a fragment of a white cravat, with the mark of a bloody thumb on it, and the initials T. B. in the corner. Bevan was horror-struck as a thought flashed across his mind.

"I must go immediately," he said, "into Hawkstone."

"Instantly!" said Villiers. And as Bevan, hurried and agitated, reached Bentley's door and found Mrs. Alsop almost in tears with her anxiety about her master a little urchin brought a note to the door from Bentley.

"Thank God, thank God!" exclaimed Bevan.

It was Bentley's note, written under Cookesley's direction.

"And where did you bring this from, boy?"

"From Cuxteth Heath."

"And who gave it you — Mr. Bentley?"

"No, sir."

"Who was it?"

The boy hesitated to tell; and Bevan was obliged to threaten him.

"It was a man in a drab jacket."

"A workman?"

"Yes."

"Does Mr. Bentley ever go there, Mrs. Alsop?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"Has he any friends in that direction?"

"I never heard, sir."

"Why did you hesitate, boy, to tell us about it?"

"The man gave me a sixpence, and told me not to say any thing."

"This is Mr. Bentley's watch, is it not, Mrs. Alsop?"

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Alsop, "to be sure it is. Where did you find it?"

But Bevan, anxious and perplexed, thought it best not to inform her.

"This is certainly Mr. Bentley's handwriting," he observed. "Here are the crossings of his t's, and his y at the end of his signature. But it seems cramped and awkward: how the letters straggle! and the lines are not straight. Here, boy, come with me." And he returned to Villiers, at the

keeper's lodge, taking the poor trembling urchin with him for further examination. And the result of the examination was, that both gentlemen sent for their horses, and, late as it was, and near sunset, accompanied by the keeper and one of his men, they set forward to Cuxteth Heath.

"It's a bad place, sir, that heath!" said the keeper, a thick-set, sturdy English yeoman. "It's the place where Jack Roberts was robbed last week. The men in the forest are a terrible set. But I've brought my rifle, sir; and I see you've got a good stick, sir; and here's another for you, Mr. Bevan." And the party set out.

CHAPTER IV.

THE sun had set for some time behind the huge grey granite range of mountains which bound the wild district known by the name of Hawkstone Forest. The shadows of the evening were deepening; and the glare of the furnaces and iron-works blazed out more luridly upon the blackened disfigured hosts of workmen who were standing about in the steep narrow street of Howlas, the village, or almost town, of low wretched houses which had sprung up recently, since the opening of the works by Sir Matthew Blake. The men themselves, instead of going home after their work, or laughing and taking openly in the street, were gathered together in little knots. One or two of them had dirty newspapers in their hands, from which they were reading out portions to groups of others. Even the women, slatternly and hollow-eyed, seemed to take a deeper interest than ordinary in what was passing; and, with their babies in their arms, forced their way into the little knots of political disputants, and added their angry voices to the arguments which exasperated their husbands against the existing state of things.

"Bread risen twopence a gallon!" sighed Jenny Ball, a poor wan-looking creature with two young children hanging about her. "And I've nothing to give them. And John gone away to find work!"

"Work!" responded Mrs. Jubb, a red-armed and red-faced virago. "Where's he to get work? Arn't

three more furnaces to be blown out to-morrow? And what's to become of us then?"

"Let's go to Sir Matthew at once," proposed the more decent and pacific Mrs. Smith, who seemed to have more confidence in the tender mercies of a money-making age than a longer experience would have justified.

"Go to Sir Matthew!" cried Mrs. Jubb. "What good would Sir Matthew do you, or ten thousand the like of him?"

"Isn't it by us," asked Mary Adams, "that he makes his money? And there he is, a hundred miles off, as rich as a Jew."

"John," said the first speaker, "did go to the house. He told me it was such a fine place—all beautiful gardens, and trees, and fine servants; and just as he came up to the door, Madam Blake and her children were all going out in a fine gilt carriage. But the servants swore at him, and would not let him come up. And then he met Sir Matthew, riding by himself in the park, and spoke to him, and told him who he was (poor fellow! he hadn't touched a bit of bread that day), and Sir Matthew fell into a passion, and told him to get about his business. 'He left all that,' he said, 'to the agent.'"

"And the agent deserves to be shot!" cried the virago.

"And he'll have his deserts soon," muttered a black-looking ruffian, with a quantity of hair about his face.

"Ah!" murmured Jenny to herself, "it was the agent drove us here. We never thought of leaving our cottage while my lord lived on his estate; and we had our garden, and kept a pig and a cow; and every thing went well with us, till my lord went away. And then farmer Speed wanted to pull down the cottage, and declared the garden took John from

his work. And the agent did not mind so long as he got the rent; and so we were turned out on the world."

"And came up to the hills to get work!" cried the virago, with a bitter laugh. "Work for three months, and then starving!"

"If we had but saved a little," said Mrs. Smith, more quietly, "it would be something."

"And how's a poor man to save?" asked Mrs. Jubb. "Don't they grind down his wages to the lowest they can?"

"I remember," said Jenny, "when we had our cottage, my lady and the young ladies used to come and see us very often; and every Monday morning either Miss Mary or the clergyman came, and we gave them sixpence to put by for us; and when we were ill, or wanted some money to buy a cow, or the like, there was always something to look to."

"I should like to see Madam Blake, or her fine daughters, doing any thing of the kind," cried the virago. "Why they'd be afraid of coming near us, for fear of blacking their fine gowns."

"They live so far off," interposed Mrs. Smith, in a mediatorial tone.

"Ay," rejoined Mrs. Jubb; "they don't like to come here, up in the hills, where they get all their money from. It does not do among fine ladies and gentlemen to be a coal-merchant or an iron-man."

"Madam Blake did come up here once," said poor Jenny; "I recollect, just about the time of the election; and she rode up in a fine carriage, with some fine ladies with her. But she didn't speak to any of us, and held her handkerchief to her nose all the time, as if she was afraid of catching the plague."

"Ay," continued the virago, "I remember, too. And when my girl Susan, with the young ones, got

close to Miss Julia, madam's daughter, and was looking at her fine dress, what did Miss Julia do but told her to get away, a nasty dirty thing, or she'd spoil her gown?"

"Well! they'll all get their dues very shortly," muttered the same ruffian as before. "That's one comfort!"

But further remarks from him were checked by a burst of uproar from a large body collected round an orator at the corner of the street. "Down with them! down with them! down with the rascally Tories!"

"That's right!" thundered the speaker, as soon as the clamour had subsided. "Down with the Tories! They are the men that suck your blood, and grind your life out. What care they for the people's groans, or the cries of your starving children, so long as they can fatten in luxury, and keep you all chained like slaves?"

"Down with them! down with them!" was again clamoured forth from a hundred voices. "Down with the bloody tyrants!"

"Sir Matthew ain't a Tory," cried a voice from the mob. "No!" continued, the speaker, "he's worse; he's one of your brutal, cheating, palavering Whigs, that are always promising the people to do something for them, when they are out of place themselves, and when they get in they are worse than the Tories, ten times over. No, my friends, the Charter! the Charter! Nothing will do you any good but that. Hurrah for the Charter!"

And caps, and hats, and voices, and hands, all simultaneously went up into the air.

"What do they mean by the Charter?" asked Jenny of Mrs. Jubb.

"I'm sure I don't know," was the reply; "but it's something, my man tells me, is to raise the

wages, and give us bread for two-pence a gallon, and beer for nothing."

"And tea and sugar?" asked Mrs. Smith, who was remarkably fond of that beverage.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Jubb, "tea and sugar is to be supplied by the parish."

"And there are to be no poor-laws?" asked Mrs. Smith.

"No poor-laws, no poor-laws!" caught up the mob. "Down with the poor-laws!"

"And no parsons!" said another voice.

"And no gentlemen!" cried a third. "Down with the parsons! down with the gentlemen!" Down with the parsons! was the universal cry.

"And your bishops!" exclaimed another man, with a huge head of red hair, and in the dress of a butcher, with something sinister about his eyes, and a singular demeanour, as if, with great powers of disguising himself, he was still not perfectly at home in his dress.

"Yes, your bishops!" continued the orator. "I'll just read you here a paper, telling you how much they grind out from the sweat of the poor. Here's the Archbishop of Canterbury, 100,000*l.* a-year; the Archbishop of York, 90,000*l.*; the Bishop of Winchester, 80,000*l.*; the Bishop of Durham, 50,000*l.*—and all for doing nothing."

"No bishops, no bishops! No parsons! Down with the parsons!" re-echoed the mob; and it may well be supposed the substantives were not allowed to stand alone, but were supported by various very expressive and not laudatory epithets, which, as we are not writing for a class of readers who might wish to be initiated in them, we do not feel it necessary to repeat.

"And yet," whispered poor Jenny Blake to the woman standing next her, "I've known a good

parson. When we had our cottage and our garden (and the thought of it seemed to bring water into her wasted eyes), our parson Harris (and he was a real gentleman, and the son of a lord) used to come and see us regularly; and he'd sit down in our cottage, for I always kept it clean; and we had some nice crockery, and two geraniums, and flowers in the garden, and all comfortable. And he'd talk to us quite friendly like. And when John got the fever, and nobody else would come near us, Parson Harris came just as much as ever; and used to send us wine, and read prayers to him every day."

"Prayers!" cried the virago; "what's the use of prayers and such stuff? All cant and humbug—a vile methodistical canting crew!" And poor Jenny was silenced. But she thought of Parson Harris, and of the Bible he had given her, and of the advice by which she had profited, and of the quiet Sunday's walking with John to the village church through the green cheerful meadows, and of the change which took place in him after his illness, in which the parson had contrived to make him think seriously of many things which he had before neglected. And she remembered how thankful she had been, and happy, though she could not exactly say why, when, in obedience to the parson's injunctions, they had both come together to partake of the Holy Communion; and had felt more love and confidence in each other than ever before, because they had now some foundation for it in the promise of God to bless them. But at Howlas there were no parsons and no church. And though the Methodists had run up a small red-brick conventicle, with pointed windows and shutters, in which Mr. Ebenezer Starling, the shoemaker of Hawkstone, used to preach every Sunday evening, religion was

a word with which the inhabitants of the Howlas coal and iron works felt that they had nothing to do. Sir Matthew Blake was the only power on which they felt dependence. And as religion had no obvious tendency to lay open new veins of coal, or to raise the market for iron, or to cheapen the wages of workmen, Sir Matthew felt that it was a subject with which he had no right to interfere. His object was income ; and with income he was perfectly content. We must not, however, do him injustice. He had lately subscribed twenty pounds to build a chapel-of-ease at Howlas, on the earnest remonstrances of the bishop and representations made by his agent of the alarming state of the workmen, and of the need of some moral control over them. And it should also be said in his favour, that he had done this even at a time when the income from his iron-works had dwindled from 15,000*l.* to 12,000*l.* a year; and the late cold spring had so raised the price of early forced strawberries, that Lady Blake, at her last London party, had been obliged to give two guineas a pottle for them. Sir Matthew had observed this item in his monthly accounts just before he signed his cheque for the church, which otherwise he had intended to have made thirty pounds. But, as he properly said, justice to himself and to his family was the first thing to be considered. And with such enormous drains upon his income, and the necessity of keeping up his station in society (Sir Matthew had himself in his youth wielded a pickaxe in the mines which were then his own), it was, he said, imperative on him,—he felt himself, in fact, conscientiously bound to be prudent and economical.

By degrees, the hearers and talkers in the dirty blackened streets of Howlas dropped off to their respective habitations, — some to a cold comfortless

hearth, round which a knot of ragged children quarrelled over their scanty meal of potatoes and salt; others to endure the scolding of their more thrifty but ill-tempered wives; and others to drive out the thoughts both of past and future, by prolonging their beer-house orgies, with a few reckless comrades, till midnight — but all fevered and fretted with a sense of misery and want, from which they saw no relief in peaceableness or order; all throwing the burden of their distress, not on their own improvidence or vice, or on the avarice of their employer, but on their rulers and the laws; all busily engaged in dreaming of a coming hour, when their own physical powers would work their relief, and the grand revolution would arrive, in which all men would have their rights — or, to interpret the phrase according to its real meaning in their ears, when every one would have every thing. As the last knot of talkers broke up, with the breaking down of an old tub, from which a fluent frothy Chartist orator had been addressing them, two of the party disengaged themselves from the rest, and passed down a dark back lane, till they reached the open road. Blacker was one; and the other, a stout, close-shaven, iron-faced person, whom, notwithstanding the substitution of a brown for a red head of hair, and rough corduroy trowsers, and smock frock, for the butcher's blue apron, might have been recognised by the cunning of his eyes as Mr. Pearce.

“And now,” said he to his companion, “tell me the whole story.”

And Blacker, with that mixture of freedom and deference which conceited men exhibit to those whom they regard as connected with persons superior in rank, and yet wish to ape and imitate in the hope of obtaining the same advantage for themselves, proceeded to recount some of the

facts which have been lately placed before the reader,—the sum of them being, according to his version of the story, that Wheeler had found his wife and the parson Bentley at the Priory ruins at ten o'clock at night, when he was removing the arms—that a scuffle took place—Wheeler had stabbed Bentley in the side—then alarmed at the consequences of a discovery, which might not only have risked his own life but have involved the detection of the whole plot in which he was engaged, he had proposed, with the two men who came down from the forest with the cart to take away the arms, that the wounded man should be thrown into the Priory well; but just as they were dragging the body to it, Connell returned, and having, for some reason or other, some influence with Wheeler, he had begged Bentley off, on condition that he should be brought to take an oath of secrecy, and be put under strict guard for some days, till he could be taken back to his home, if his wound proved slight; and thus the whole story might be kept quiet. The fear that any inquiry after Bentley might lead to the discovery of the plans, which were expected to be ripe for action in a few days, was the principal consideration which induced the reckless brutal Wheeler to consent to the reprieve of his victim.

Pearce listened to this tale with his brow knit in thought, and his little twinkling eyes almost retiring farther into his head, as if that they might pierce deeper into all its consequences and applications. He did not interrupt Blacker with a single remark—suffered him to proceed in his own half-familiar and half-consequential tone—permitted him even to lay his hand on his shoulder, to assume something of an admonitory style, and to recommend him to say nothing to Wheeler; until Blacker, pre-

suming on his silence, proceeded to address him—"Now, my good fellow, I would advise you to go back to Hawkstone, and we will——" But at this point Pearce quietly removed the hand from its familiar posture, and begged his presuming companion to attend to his own business. "I have not chosen and recommended you to my friends, Mr. Blacker, for the purpose of giving us advice, but of executing our orders. *We* are perfectly aware of the course which is to be pursued. And you will do well to remember this . . . Have the goodness to tell me, sir, where they have taken the clergyman to?"

Even Blacker himself, accustomed to see Pearce in different situations as well as in different attires, was thrown back, and taken by surprise at the decided authoritative tone in which he now spoke. But Pearce knew his man—a vain, weak, ambitious person, educated (for, in the present day, who is not educated?), who could write, and read, and cipher (for he had been educated at a National School), and made use of his accomplishments to write speeches for meetings of mechanics and Chartists, and to read not only as many Sunday newspapers as he could obtain, but even a higher class of publications on politics, religion, and all the other interests of life, which a certain class of writers are now endeavouring to lower to the comprehension, and submit to the judgment, of the people,—meaning by the people the majority of the nation, as told by the head. Blacker's ambition was that of a little, bustling mind, fond of obtaining importance by being admitted to secrets, trusted with a little power, and permitted to associate with persons above him. He was just the character which the system of Romanism would have seized on and turned into a pliant instrument in the hands of religion. And though there were points in his character which

made him dangerous, because those who are fond of hearing are inclined also to be fond of talking, he possessed a certain degree of influence with the lower classes of workmen and his general companions, and was free from many of those faults, such as drunkenness, which rendered it impossible for Pearce to trust others. Having the key to his mind, Pearce knew how to rule it ; and by alternate confidence and mystery, by maintaining his own superiority, and at the same time flattering his tool with occasional panegyrics, and prospects of advancement to a still higher share in the great work before them — and especially by allowing him to have glimpses of the important part which Pearce himself was playing, and of his confidential communication with other great personages — he found it easier, as well as safer, to employ Blacker for his purposes than Wheeler, whose thorough selfishness and profligacy placed him beyond all control. Wheeler, also, he had incautiously admitted to some part of his confidence before his character became thoroughly bad ; he had even trusted him with some important papers, which Wheeler was to transmit to another party. But, with as much cunning as Pearce himself, he had pretended to lose them, and still retained them in his own possession, with the secret resolution of not giving them up, in proportion as he found that Pearce began to distrust him, and was employing Blacker to perform many important services which had before been committed to himself. Among these was the distribution of sundry sums of money, of which Pearce appeared to have considerable command, though he managed it with economy and prudence in the prosecution of his plans. In fact, Wheeler had formed views and objects of his own, which Pearce would willingly

have made subservient to his own, could he have made Wheeler a pliant and submissive instrument. And when this became impracticable, the next thing was to remove him.

But, for the present, we must leave the confederates, and return to Villiers.

CHAPTER V.

VILLIERS himself was an active and indefatigable walker; but Bevan's slight frame, and evident inability to endure much exertion, suggested to the keeper the necessity of waiting for their horses at a farm-house occupied by one of Villiers's principal tenants. The boy, a shrewd, cunning little imp, was then placed before the keeper, and they rode on. The road ran in the same direction with that along which Bentley had been carried. It rose up from the rich valley in which the ruins of the Priory lay, and mounted along the side of a deep ravine, at the bottom of which a torrent, sparkling at intervals through a hanging mass of oak and hazel thicket, was dashing over a bed of limestone rock, and hollowing its passage through a labyrinth of little caverns and crags. As it ascended, the view opened over a wider expanse of high table-land, thinly cultivated, but dotted over with miserable cabins. At intervals the brown moor was broken by heaps of coal and slag, and the blackened sheds and tall chimneys belonging to the steam-engines, which drew the water from the pits; and, above all, rose the gaunt jagged outline of the mountain ridge, which was known as Hawkstone Forest. Villiers, who had known the district as a boy, when permitted to accompany the keeper in a shooting expedition, before its solitude had been disturbed by the discovery of its mineral treasures, was pained at the change which had taken place.

“And yet,” he said to Bevan, “these are the elements of wealth; Nature intended them to be employed in the service of man. They foster industry, stimulate arts, contribute to the comforts of life. Alas! that all this should be purchased at the expense of so many higher and holier interests—that the treasures of a nation should be supplied by converting its populace into demons!”

And as Villiers uttered these words, he pointed out to his companion a gang of blackened, debauched, ferocious ruffians, who were just returning from the pit’s mouth with some carts. The keeper, a shrewd, sensible, English yeoman, happened to overhear him. He fancied, also, that he perceived some sign of recognition between the boy and the people in the road; and, riding up to the side of his master, and touching his hat, he ventured to suggest that they should ride on, as the evening was closing round them.

“It is a dangerous thing, sir,” he said, “to make more show, or say more than is necessary in these places. This is no regular road; and they may be after inquiring where we are going. I know these people here well; and, if your honour will trust me, I think I can manage to find what we want: but we had better press on.” Villiers readily complied with his suggestion. But just at that moment, and as they were preparing to cross the head of the ravine, which was there covered thicker than before with an underwood of hazel along its precipitous sides, the drivers of the carts seemed to have received some signal, or else clumsily to become careless of their driving, and drew across the road so as to startle the horses, and throw the whole party into confusion. As the keeper remonstrated, and was occupied in getting clear of the obstruction, the boy managed to slide off from the horse, plunged into the

thicket, and before any of them could recover their surprise he had let himself down by branch and rock to the bottom of the hollow, and was making his escape through it without the possibility of pursuing him. The keeper and Villiers both leaped from their horses to follow him, but it was too late; and, as they turned to vent their indignation against the carts, which had caused the obstruction and escape, they observed a sort of significant laugh and chuckle between two of the most ruffianlike pitmen, who seemed to be captains of the gang. But the carts moved out of the way; the men touched their hats as they passed, not without a look of triumph as at the success of some little manœuvre; and the keeper, a cool thoughtful Englishman, having calculated the advantages of expressing his indignation, and perhaps his suspicion, thought it better to take no notice, and move on.

“There is some mischief here,” said Villiers to him, as they rode on. “You understand this district better than I do. What is the best course to pursue? Had we not better go at once to a magistrate?”

“Magistrate! sir,” exclaimed the keeper; “there’s no magistrate can do us any good in such a place as this. Why, the whole ground, sir, under our feet is tunnelled and hollowed out; and half the people are under the earth, while the other half are above it. And a pretty set it is,—the very scum of all the worst places in England, which has taken refuge here; and not a soul to take care of them, or keep them right. Heathens, sir,—worse than heathens! and miserable too. It’s a hard life they lead—women and children, all of them in darkness, and filth, and cold. I have heard some of the poor children tell of what they have gone through; and it makes one’s blood run cold.” Villiers at any other

time would have encouraged the sturdy yeoman in his communications, for he knew that much was to be learned from them. But his increasing anxiety in regard to Bentley, and his conviction that some mischief had happened to him, would not allow him to think of anything else. He reproached himself with not having endeavoured to pursue and recover the boy; but the keeper soon satisfied him that the attempt would have been hopeless. The side of the ravine was at that spot nearly perpendicular; and none but a boy, unencumbered and accustomed to expert climbing, could have found his way to the bottom; and even there it would have been impossible to prevent his escape among the hollows of the rocks. "In addition to which," continued the yeoman, "we must have left our horses here; not among friends, sir; I did not like the looks of that gang. And I suspect they knew more of the boy than it was convenient to confess."

"And what, then, are we to do?" asked Villiers.

"I think, sir," said the keeper, "if your honour will trust to me, I can find out something about the matter. I know something of this pit-folk; and one of them, if I can find him out, owes me a return for a kindness which I once did him. He is rather a superior kind of man, better educated than the rest; and if your honour will keep quiet, and say nothing, he may be able to help us."

They had now reached the middle of the flat moor, in which the great iron-works of the forest were situated; and hastening on as the evening closed in them, they came at a turn of the road upon a point, where they looked down on the wilderness of blackened cabins which had grown up round them. Tall chimneys vomiting clouds of smoke, which blighted and encrusted the whole side of the mountains; vast sheds roofed in with iron

plates, and seemingly in ruins; gigantic wheels turning and groaning; and levers of steam-engines heaving as if wearily, but eternally, up and down; the whole surrounded with rows of squalid little cottages, without garden or fence, or creeper, or anything to suggest comfort or give enjoyment; and at their dunghill-piled doors and fractured windows groups of filthy men and haggard women, some drunken and others quarrelling and blaspheming,—such was the picture which presented itself. Villiers looked round, but in vain, for a spire or tower—anything indicating a church; but there was none. Two shabby meeting-houses he passed; but when he thought of the work necessary to be achieved, and remembered what he had seen in America, he had little faith in the power of meeting-houses to promote either the peace or the morality of the empire. It was with a heavy heart that both Bevan and himself followed the guidance of the keeper to a little inn, neater than any other building, and dignified with the name of the Blake Arms Commercial Hotel; and consigning the horses to the ostler, they waited in a decent parlour the return of the keeper, who went to search for his acquaintance. Two hours passed heavily without his appearing. Both Bevan and Villiers were too anxious to converse; and even the mountain air had failed to give them an appetite for the meal which the waiting-maid served up to them. At last a knock was heard at the door, and the keeper made his appearance. He was evidently dismayed; and Bevan, whose courage was not quite of so high a pitch as Villiers's, began to think with regret on the chances which had led him into such an expedition. The keeper explained, however, that he had contrived to find his acquaintance—that he had sounded him with respect to Bentley—and was satis-

fied that the pitman knew more than he was willing to disclose.

“In fact, sir, from what he said, I cannot help fearing that things are as bad as we thought. I tried him, sir, by threats, but that would not do; for he would not say a word. Then I went to promises, and offered him money; but this would not do. At last, sir, I thought it best to mention your name; and then he told me that he had been obliged to me for some kindnesses, and that if a gentleman wished to speak with him, he would not mind seeing him. But he was a gentleman himself once, though now he is only a pitman, and would not regard so much what he said to you. So, sir, if you like to come along with me to the Horton works, I will contrive to get you a chat with him: but I think, sir, you had better come alone; only, please, sir, I hope you will take care and not commit yourself, for these are dangerous folk to deal with.”

Villiers promised to be cautious; and, under the guidance of his keeper, he proceeded to the Horton works. It was now pitch dark. The streets, if streets they might be called, were only dimly and partially lighted by a stray candle or two from an occasional shop or public-house, and by a lurid glare which spread over the horizon above the roof-tops. Many more persons were straggling along them than they had met earlier in the evening; and shouts of vulgar revelry and singing were heard from the beer-shops, which occurred at every step.

“Don’t mind, sir,” said the keeper, as Villiers seemed to hesitate at the corner of a filthy alley, “don’t mind, sir; Cookesley is a man I think you may trust. He has told me often that he was born to better things.”

And it was indeed Cookesley, the same whom we have met already at Bentley’s bed-side, who had

become acquainted with the keeper in some shooting excursion, and with whom Villiers was now to communicate. Villiers smiled at the thought of his servant suspecting him of fear; and made his way as quickly as he could through the mud and filth of the nearest approach to the Horton works. If he had had no other object in view, he would have been repaid by the sight which met him at the entrance—a sight by day-light only dreary and offensive, but in the night-time even sublime. He was groping his way in the dark, and had stumbled and nearly fallen in crossing one of the tram-roads, with which the whole ground was cut up; and, in recovering himself, he had been all but run over by a line of coal-waggons, which were moving along the path; when, on looking up, he saw a vast range of cavern-like arches yawning before him, and within each, in a deep recess, a furnace, vomiting forth a blast of flame too bright for the eye to rest on. Above him, ranges of chimneys, which broke the long line of ragged roof, were themselves throwing up a roaring blaze and flaming out like towers and steeples amidst the ruins of a sacked town abandoned to general conflagration. All around, the very earth seemed to breathe forth fire; here playing in lambent blue flames, and there throwing out great volumes of ruddy smoke, amidst vast mounds and piles, which, by daylight, were ashes and refuse, coals, and slag, but by night wore the aspect, among the flames, of ruined ramparts and battlements, and walls of buildings recently devoted to destruction. The buildings themselves, mostly of cast iron, presented vast arches and framework, which, seen with the glare of furnaces behind them, showed like enormous cloisters, of which the interior was partly consumed and partly still on fire. The noise of wheels, the rushing of the flames, the hissing of

water, the beating and throbbing of gigantic engines on each side, the cranking of chains, and the deep hoarse blasts of the furnaces, sounded in Villiers's ears more awful than anything he had ever heard even in the battle-field. Nor was the irresistible suggestion of an earthly Pandæmonium any way counteracted by the form of human beings grim with intemperance and exhaustion, and pale as spectres in the glare of the fires, who moved about in silence; here tossing about enormous bars of white hot iron, as if they were so many sticks; here seizing and passing them from side to side that they might be pressed under ponderous rollers, which tossed off from them, as the bars appeared and re-appeared beneath their jaws, a shower of flakes of fire and molten metal. In one place half-naked workmen were feeding the piles of fuel, into which the blasts poured their torrent of flame; and in another, with unwieldy crowbars they were breaking open the furnaces themselves, and pouring out the liquid lava of metal to run in streams of dazzling brilliancy into a labyrinth of currents. Villiers stood amazed; the noise was too deafening to hear or to speak. And the keeper, who was more familiar with the place, took him by the arm and led him round to a shed in the back part of the buildings, where a dark figure was standing against the wall, and spoke to the keeper on their approach with a manner and language far superior to what might have been expected from his dirty fustian jacket, and hands and face begrimed with filth.

Few persons possessed in a greater degree than Villiers that tact and knowledge of the world which enable us at once to see the accessible points of human character, and to meet them upon that footing on which they most wish to be treated. His pride was that of station, and had nothing in it

either personal or selfish ; and he knew that among the poorest of men, reduced by fortune from their original position as gentlemen—that even where the degradation has been caused by vice—still there are few things to which the mind clings with so much fondness as the name and old associations of a gentleman. It was as much from delicacy of feeling, from essential good nature, from the confidence which his own honour induced him to place in others, as from policy and manœuvre, that he resolved to throw himself at once upon the feelings which it was possible the unhappy man before him might still retain from his former situation ; and therefore dismissing the keeper, he took Cookesley's hand, led him into the shed, where a dim rushlight was burning on a plank, and making him sit down on the only seat there was, he proceeded to tell him openly his name and his object. A short-sighted manœuvrer would have endeavoured to hide both, and would have thought it prudence. Villiers hated mystery, and had no fear, that he should practise concealment ; and his course was the wisest. Cookesley knew both before. But the openness and manliness of the communication, the confidence which it reposed, and the little marks of respect which Villiers showed when he alluded to his knowledge of Cookesley's former condition, won instantly on all the unhappy man's better feelings. Something of his own self-respect returned on finding himself treated with respect by a man like Villiers.

"I think, sir," he said, "we had better put out this light, for I should not like to be seen holding communication with you here. They would suspect something ; and we are rather a lawless set. Stay, sir, you can come round with me to see the works. Gentlemen often do that at night, and then I can answer you any questions which it is safe for me

to do without our being noticed. You have put confidence in me, sir. I am sure I may put confidence in you."

He then proceeded to tell him so much of Bentley's story as he had heard himself; that he had been found late at the Priory ruins by Wheeler, and Wheeler's wife with him; that there had been a scuffle, and Bentley had been stabbed; and that he would have been thrown into the well but for the interposition of an Irishman, whom he had been kind to; and that he was brought up into the forest to be sworn to secrecy, and kept there till he could return without compromising any one. "He is here, sir; and I happen to be a friend of his—an old schoolfellow, though I am now in this plight; and I will do every thing I can for him."

Villiers was thoroughly shocked; shocked at the suggestion which Cookesley took care to give of the cause of the scuffle; shocked at the narrowness of the escape; shocked at Bentley's present situation. "Was the wound dangerous?" he asked.

"No, sir, I was myself, as you have heard, bred for a doctor, and have taken care of it. But he must be kept quiet."

"And can I see him?" asked Villiers.

Cookesley not only shook his head, but answered, peremptorily, "No! It would be as much as his life is worth, and yours also, sir, for you to do any thing of the kind. They would make away with him at once, if they suspected that the business was discovered."

"But, my good friend," replied Villiers, "a magistrate's warrant would surely enable me to find him and take him home?"

Cookesley put his hand on Villiers's shoulder, and whispered to him to be silent—that they were overheard. And he proceeded to show Villiers some

machinery, and busy him in some information respecting the process of casting. But two men followed them, and came close to Villiers to scrutinise him with a look of suspicion, as soon as they could do so without exciting observation. Cookesley led him away.

“I’ll walk home with you, sir, myself. It is an ugly path to find, and pitch dark; and, to tell the truth, I do not like the looks of those men who overheard you just now. This is not a place or a time to talk of magistrates and warrants.”

He seemed to breathe more freely as they reached the road which led into the town. But even then Villiers perceived that he looked frequently behind him, and avoided opening his lips on the subject of Bentley till they reached the inn-door, and Villiers asked him to come in and sit down. He came in, closed the door of the room carefully, and, taking his seat at the table, he said, “Sir, I have done you a kindness, and done it at my own risk; for, of course, if you were resolved on going to a magistrate, you might soon lay hands upon me, and so could others too. But I trust to your honour as a gentleman, that you will not let my name be known in this affair, in which I have no concern except as wishing well to Mr. Bentley, and able, perhaps, to be of service to him, if all things go quietly. But I tell you fairly, that I can give you no more information; and I would earnestly advise you not to seek for it. If you will take my recommendation, gentlemen, who know something more of this place than you can, you will keep yourselves within doors this evening: let no one know who you are, or what you want, and get off as early to-morrow morning as you can. And if you want never to see Mr. Bentley, again, and to send him down to the bottom of a pit-hole with a dozen holes in his body,

I, who know the hands into which he has fallen, would advise you to go to a magistrate, and come up here to search for him with a body of policemen. If you would have him safe, you must hush up the matter, and not let a soul know it. Good evening, gentlemen."

There was a mystery, and a seriousness, and, at the same time, an obvious reasonableness in his words, which shook Villiers's resolution to make no delay in obtaining a magistrate's assistance. He stopped Cookesley, as he was taking up his hat, and questioned him once more on the motives which rendered it so great an object with Bentley's assailant to retain him a prisoner. His promise of secrecy had been given: and if the story of the origin of the scuffle was true, he was himself deeply interested in maintaining it. Why not allow him, at once, to return to his friends? Cookesley would not remain to listen; but shaking his head, and saying that he could answer no more questions, contented himself with once more repeating his warning to them to say nothing, and then Bentley might be saved. "But be assured," he said, "that the first move which a magistrate takes to find him, his life is not worth a farthing. Good evening, gentlemen; good evening, keeper: you are an honest man, and I hope you are not playing me the rogue in leading me into this trap."

Villiers assured him that no advantage should be taken of his information to involve him in any inconvenience: and as he went out of the room with him, he unobservedly slipped some money into his hand, which Cookesley, not without a slight effort of resistance, was easily induced to pocket.

So long as he had before him the fine generous countenance of Villiers, his frank and sincere manner, and his voice full of truth, Cookesley fas-

minated by the mere influence of his high-minded character, felt no fear at the breach of confidence to which he had committed himself. He had, indeed, betrayed nothing beyond what was necessary to preserve the life of Bentley, for whom he was really interested. His warning had been salutary and wise. He knew that any open attempt to search for him, or to release him (for he was, in fact, a prisoner, strictly watched, although his comforts had been kindly provided for by himself and the grateful Connell, with the aid of the good Sisters of Charity) would be futile, and only lead to some desperate mode of baffling all further inquiry. But he knew, also, that among the banditti with whom he was enrolled, and in whose insurrectionary movements he was deeply involved, an informer of any kind would be soon detected, and unscrupulously visited with summary vengeance. He had, indeed, been wisely silent on the principal reasons which rendered Wheeler and his gang so anxious to keep Bentley in their hands. They believed, from his presence at the ruins, that he must be acquainted with the secret of their arms and plots, and that any inquiry which might be instituted into the attack on him would lead to the discovery of Wheeler's crime, and, through him, to a knowledge of the preparations and plans which they were forming for an outbreak of violence—blind violence and futile outbreak, but to which they were encouraged by the secret promises and negotiations of Pearce. And Pearce himself had a political object to answer by producing a popular commotion at that crisis, and alarming a timid ministry unfavourable to the projects by which Romanism was paving its way to gradual exaltation. The brute passion of the mob, and their love of plunder, was a sufficient stimulus to render them, in his dexterous

hands, a pliant body, which he could wield at pleasure through his subordinate agents, without compromising himself personally by taking the lead. His quick eye, his ready suspicious intuition, the impenetrable secrecy which he threw round his own movements, the art with which he played instrument against instrument, his obvious interest and influence with some higher power, the facility with which he extracted and combined information from his various spies, and the command which his powerful intellect enabled him to exercise over uneducated and vulgar minds,—all this, coupled with his power of disguising himself, and accommodating himself to any character which he chose to assume, rendered him an object of mingled fear and admiration. Each man felt that he was at his mercy; and it was Pearce's chief object that they should be strongly impressed with such a feeling: and his one great rule of policy was, to obtain over them severally an entire command, by possessing himself of some secret which would make them dependent on him for their safety.

All this Cookesley, far superior to his miserable comrades in education and mind, however debased by profligacy, thoroughly knew. He had struggled more than any other against Pearce's assumption and pretensions, but in vain; and having no support in his own conscience, or confidence in the wretches with whom he was thrown, he finally succumbed to him, as under a species of fascination. What, therefore, was his alarm when, as he came out of the inn-door, and had proceeded a few paces down the street, he heard a step follow him, and found a hand seize him by the arm.

"You must come with me, Mr. Cookesley," said the deep voice, which he immediately recognised to be Pearce's. "I have something to say to you."

Cookesley actually shook under the grasp of Pearce; but he endeavoured to assume a tone of indifference, and followed him into the Black Lion, a little public-house opposite to the inn.

"Bring a light!" cried Pearce. "Leave the room! Shut the door! Why do you stand there?"

And the little waiting-girl, to whom his orders were fiercely addressed, ran away as fast as she could from such a ferocious guest.

"Cookesley," said Pearce, coming up closely to his panic-struck companion, "you are a traitor!"

Cookesley staggered back, and sinking down in a chair, affected to ask him, with surprise, what he meant?

"I mean," continued Pearce, fixing on him that steadfast searching look for which he was so remarkable—"I mean that you have betrayed Wheeler and his set to that person at the inn there, Mr. Villiers. And you know what traitors deserve, and what in this place they are sure to meet with."

Cookesley endeavoured to stammer out an explanation.

"No words," said Pearce, in the same unbroken tone, "no explanation. You think, like some others, that you can act without my seeing you. You did not suppose that I was by, when that fellow the keeper came to you, or when you were putting out the candle in the shed, and showing Villiers the works—ah!—or when you talked of magistrates and warrants. Be advised," he continued. "When you would do a thing which I am not to see, or speak a word which I am not to hear, get upon the topmost stone of Hawkstone Forest, or out at sea, out of sight of land, and even then beware lest the birds and the fish should prove tell-tales. And now you have been closeted with them over

there, and you have told them where that poor wretch Bentley is to be found. How much money had you for this job?"

To the former part of the sentence Cookesley was preparing to answer, boldly and firmly, that he had given no information whatever; but the latter rather disconcerted him.

"I must know all," said Pearce. "How much money did he give you?"

And Cookesley pulled out three sovereigns from his pocket. He was preparing to offer Pearce a share, in the hope that it would mollify him, but Pearce thrust his hand aside in disdain. "So you think I am to be bribed like yourself, Mr. Cookesley; and you a gentleman born!"

"Gentleman!" sighed Cookesley, "gentleman! I'm no gentleman!"—for with his courage and self-confidence sank all his other better feelings, and he seemed to think that the only escape from degradation was to bury himself at once in its lowest depths.

"Do you suppose I want money?" said Pearce. "I that can have the command of hundreds—ay, thousands." And he pulled a pocket-book from his coat filled with bank-notes?"

"And what then do you want, sir?" asked Cookesley. "I have told nothing but that Mr. Bentley is here, and that the best thing is for his friends to remain quiet, and say nothing."

"And Villiers, then," said Pearce, almost gnashing his teeth with hatred as he used the word, "knows nothing of the place where Bentley is lying?"

"Nothing," said Cookesley. "I would not tell him."

"Nor about the arms?" continued Pearce.

"Not a syllable," said Cookesley, thinking that

he had mitigated his case. But Pearce would allow nothing of the kind.

"Fool that you were!" he said, "to stop short in your treachery — to think that you could tell so much safely, and to be afraid to tell all. Do you suppose," he said, "that Wheeler and his crew will let you off, because, while only half a villain, you have been wholly a fool?"

"Villain!" cried Cookesley, starting up in fury, and recovering his energy. "How dare you call me villain?"

Pearce stood unmoved, and only smiled.

"Sit down, sit down, Cookesley. Do not make a fool of yourself with me. You know there is no great harm in speaking truth; and what are we all but ——? Would you call us honest men yourself?" And he clapped him on the back, with a laugh, and something of a kindly manner. Cookesley answered sulkily, "No!"

"Well, then, shake hands. I only meant to frighten you. Nobody knows any thing of the matter but myself. And I'll tell you honestly, I have a greater regard for you than for any of them put together. I like a man of education. None of your half-sot, half-brute, that could do nothing but break heads and get drunk. Your secret, Cookesley, is safe with me. Only take especial care that that Wheeler does not hear it. He is as dangerous a fellow as I know; and I would not give a farthing for your head, if he knew you had betrayed him."

"I have not betrayed him!" said Cookesley, passionately.

"Hush! hush! do not speak so loud," said Pearce. "It will be just the same with him, whether you have or not, if he knows you have been with Villiers. But you are in my care, and I am your friend. So shake hands."

Cookesley, somewhat relieved, and afraid to exasperate him, gave him his hand.

"Now will you have something to drink?" asked Pearce.

Cookesley nodded his head; and some brandy and water being brought in, Pearce asked for a piece of paper, and writing a few lines on it in a false hand, he folded it up, put it in his pocket, and once more shaking Cookesley by the hand, and telling him not to be afraid, Pearce left the room.

Any one who observed him would have been struck by the paleness of his countenance, as he threw off the restraint which he had imposed on himself in the presence of Cookesley. His lips quivered—his eyes glared horribly—his heart beat; and he strode along the street as if a demon were pursuing him. Then he stopped short and faltered—then hurried on—then returned upon his steps. Once or twice he took the paper from his pocket, and seemed on the point of tearing it to pieces; but the passion under which he was labouring recovered its sway, and replacing it, he pushed on across some fields which lay amidst the broken ground that surrounded the pits, until he found himself at the gate of a stone building adjoining one of the most remote works of the place. A low tap caused the door to be opened, and Pearce found Blacker, the same man whom he had parted with on the road, sitting in a low vaulted room by the side of a cheerful fire, smoking, and with a glass of punch before him.

"Is all right?" asked Pearce.

"Yes."

"Are the women up stairs?"

"No," answered Blacker. "I have sent them home for the night."

"Is the fellow asleep?"

"Yes : they dressed his wound, and he has been asleep for the last hour. I've got rid of Burke and all of them, and now the ground is quite clear." Pearce leaned upon the chimney-piece, with his arms folded, for some minutes, in a gloomy reverie. Once more he took the paper from his pocket, and prepared to tear it, and throw it into the fire ; but he caught Blacker's eyes looking on him with surprise, and something like contempt ; and starting from his silence, he thrust the paper into Blacker's hand, and bade him go with it to the Blake Arms. "Give it to Villiers, and bring him here."

"And do you think he'll come?"

"Try," said Pearce. "You know what to say."

The door closed upon Blacker ; and Pearce flung himself into a chair, threw his legs on the table, and began whistling. But his voice shook. He tried to think of any thing — every thing — but where he was and what he was doing. He rose, thrust his hands into his pockets, and with an air of unconcern walked about to look at the party-coloured prints of the Prodigal Son, and other Scripture subjects which hung on the walls, till he came to one which represented the Day of Judgment, and the miserable man quailed at it, and hurried away to stir the fire. As a knock at the door was heard, he actually sprang from his chair with terror ; but it was only Blacker returned. Pearce gasped for breath as he saw him.

"You have been quick," he said. "Will he come?"

"I have not been down," said Blacker. "I came back to say a word to you. Why, you seem all aghest." And he gazed with surprise at Pearce's face, livid with contending emotions.

"I say, Mr. Pearce, you do not mean any thing bad, do you, in having Mr. Villiers up here?"

"Any thing bad!" faltered Pearce. "What do you mean?"

"I mean," said Blacker, "that if you have any other job to do than what you told me of, I am not your man. Why, you seem as if you were going to ——"

His words were interrupted by a faint voice from an upper room, asking for some toast and water. It was Bentley, whose kind nurse had left him, and who, waking in a fever of thirst, and hearing voices below, endeavoured to make them sensible of his want. But he trembled as he heard the hoarse voices which growled in the room beneath, and still more when Pearce called out to him to be still, with the addition of a ferocious curse on him for disturbing them.

"Remember," said Blacker, whose courage and command over Pearce rose with the perception that Pearce himself was losing his presence of mind under some evil influence — "remember, you told me that you only wanted to get Bentley out of Wheeler's hands, without seeming to take a part in it yourself. There is no harm in that;—and if you wish to get a hold over Wheeler and recover your papers, and think that Mr. Bentley can help you — and if there is a gentleman here who will probably be glad to carry him off, why neither is there any harm in that. But, man! that is not a thing to make a captain of your spirit tremble, and jump, and quaver, and look like a ghost about it. If you were going to commit ——"

"Hush! hush!" said Pearce, hastily, putting his hand to Blacker's mouth to prevent his giving utterance to the horrible word. "That is all! I want nothing more! That's all, I assure you! Only that fellow Cookesley has put me into a flurry with his treachery. That's all, I assure you!" And

he seemed relieved by hearing from his own lips his intention to do nothing more.

"Shall I go, then?" asked Blacker.

Pearce hesitated. "Yes!—No!—Yes!"

"Well, what do you mean?" said Blacker, surprised. "Go or not? Why, you do not know your own mind to-night. I never saw you in such a way before. What are we to do if you fall into such tantarums as this, when the day comes for action?"

He had struck the key, and the resolution was formed.

"Go!" said Pearce, peremptorily. And Blacker, as if anxious to avoid further doubt, left the building.

"After all," said Pearce to himself, "I need not do more than I said. There is no harm in that; and that will be so much gain." And composing his conscience with the thought that he had not yet resolved on any thing worse, he once more sat down before the fire, and emptying (a rare thing with him) the glass of punch which Blacker had left, he gazed upon the coals, and endeavoured to occupy himself in finding out rivers and landscapes, trees and rocks—any thing which had not life, any thing which could not recal his thoughts to himself, in the burning embers.

CHAPTER VI.

IN the meantime Villiers and Bevan were deliberating on the proper steps for them to take. The situation of Bentley was obviously most precarious, and might be rendered fatal by any rash movement on the part of his friends. Under the most favourable circumstances his character was at stake if the story of Cookesley was true; and when they recalled the scene which they had witnessed at the ruins, the frenzy of poor Margaret, and the watch which had been found in her pocket, they scarcely dared to open their lips on the subject. The keeper earnestly advised them to take Cookesley's advice, to return home, and wait quietly, while he would, by means of Cookesley, keep a watch on all that passed, and endeavour to procure Bentley's safe return without notice or observation.

"A little money, sir," he said, "judiciously employed, will do much—much more than a whole body of police and fifty magistrates." Bevan was much inclined to side with him. But Villiers hesitated. It was a compromise of principle with him to seek by manœuvre what ought to be attainable by law. He could not bear the thought of quitting the forest from fear of having violence offered to them; and he resolved to remain there privately, while Bevan returned, and to seek some opportunity of obtaining farther communication with Cookesley, and through him with Bentley. His mind had just been made up, when the waiter came in with a shabby note, which had been brought for Mr. Vil-

liers by a person who was waiting on the outside. Villiers was surprised, but remembering that Cookesley knew his name, he was less astonished to find that the note came from him. It was to say that he had found an opportunity of letting Villiers see Mr. Bentley, if he would come alone with the bearer, who was a trustworthy person. And again enjoining his secrecy, and committing himself to Villiers's honour, the writer had added, in a postscript, that one of the three sovereigns which Villiers had given him was a bad one; but he did not wish to make any allusion to this, satisfied that a gentleman would make it worth his while to run such a risk for him.

This last allusion Pearce had artfully introduced; and it had the full effect of satisfying Villiers that the note came from the same party, who had already exhibited so much better feeling than could have been expected from his situation.

"Show the man in," said Villiers.

But the waiter returned, and said that the bearer would like to speak with Mr. Villiers alone. Villiers went into another room. Blacker told his tale with apparent openness. He had been sent by Cookesley—could show the way to the house where Bentley was lying; but beyond that he knew nothing.

"And will you go?" said Bevan to him on his return to the room. "Will you trust yourself in such a place as this to a man of whom you know nothing, and upon such an expedition?"

The keeper ventured to remonstrate also, but with no effect.

"Let us go with you at least," they said.

"No," replied Villiers; the stipulation is, that I come alone! and if I am to do any good, it must be by venturing every thing."

“You will take my pistols, sir?” said the keeper.

Villiers at first hesitated. “I know,” he said, “that there is risk ; but I must trust wholly to another arm than my own. No precaution of this kind can save me if it is His pleasure that I should fall into mischief. With Him I am safe unarmed ; and to Him I shall commit myself.”

Bevan, however, urged upon him the duty of providing human means of defence as well as of relying upon Providence ; and he consented to take the arms. He went up stairs for a few minutes, remained humbly upon his knees in prayer, and returned, calm and composed, to accompany Blacker, charging upon his companions to remain where they were, and not to follow him.

The clouds which had obscured the early part of the night had now swept away, and the stars threw a faint light on the path which his guide took. It crossed the principal thoroughfares of the straggling town, till it fell into a tram-road between two walls, one of which Blacker cleared with a spring, and requesting Villiers to follow him, he led the way across some fields. Villiers hesitated for a moment as he looked round on the solitude of the spot, so favourable to any treachery or violence. But Blacker assured him there was no fear ; and the forward conceited young man, proud of an opportunity of making acquaintance with a gentleman, fell into the conversation which Villiers opened with a view of ascertaining the character of his companion. He found him talkative, vain, and pert, and evidently full of his own importance, to which he more than once alluded with an air of mystery, especially when Villiers endeavoured to obtain from him some information on the subject of Bentley. He threw out hints that it might not be difficult for Mr. Bentley

to get away if he had any friend to help him, that he himself could show any person the way if he had a mind. All that would be wanted would be a little money. And Villiers felt persuaded that he should find no difficulty in obtaining his guide's assistance if he found Bentley capable of being moved. He talked to the young man in a kind and considerate manner; suggested that his present situation was not one fitted for a person who had evidently received a good education; hinted at his own means of being serviceable to him; and before they had reached the cottage, Blacker was congratulating himself that in serving the ends of Pearce he was at the same time providing for himself a friend of so much importance as Villiers, and whom he could now lay under a lasting obligation. He was not indeed without his misgivings as to Pearce's intentions; but he knew nothing of Pearce's feelings towards the person whom he was conducting; and accounting to himself for the strange disturbance and paroxysm of feeling under which Pearce had laboured by the anxiety which had been caused by the discovery of Cookesley's communication with Villiers, he reached the door of the cottage where Bentley lay.

Every thing was silent around it. A light was dimly burning in each of two windows, both of them curtained and closed, one on the ground-floor, and the other in the room above it; but no one could be seen; and only one person was near, hidden behind a projection of the wall within a shed, which allowed him to observe what passed at the door through an aperture in some planks. Blacker bade Villiers remain, without speaking or moving, under cover of a heap of rubbish. He unlatched the door cautiously, but the room was empty, the fire burning clear, and the candle flickering in the socket. He

then ascended the stairs, looked into all the rooms, and having satisfied himself that there was no one in the cottage, even under the beds or in the closets, he brought Villiers carefully within the door, and led him up the creaking stairs to Bentley's room, charging him not to say under whose guidance he had come there.

No eye but one had witnessed the expression of Pearce's demoniacal countenance, when after waiting, breathless and palpitating with suspense for the return of Blacker, he saw him through the aperture of the door approach, and Villiers with him. He sprang up with a ferocious triumph, but checked himself, lest he should make a noise. "Fool! dolt! idiot, that he is!" he muttered to himself, "to be caught by such a feather! He is mine! I have him in my power! Now what is to be done with him?" And he threw himself back against the wall with the look of a gambler whose whole soul had been concentrated in one throw of the dice, and to whom it had been successful. Whatever misgivings, or relentings, or balancings he had admitted before, between the desire of obtaining a thorough command over Wheeler through the means of Bentley, and the thirst for revenging himself on Villiers, all had now vanished. The sight of the man whom he hated with such a bitter hatred—hated as one who had been injured, and still more as one who had injured beyond the possibility of reparation, drove from him all compunctious visitings. He remembered (for even in his paroxysms of passion he could still calculate), that he had committed himself to Blacker farther than was safe, and filled himself with the very spirit of intrigue; and conscious how little any one could place confidence in himself, he trembled at the thought of permitting any one to possess a secret

which might place him in the power of another. His mind was made up; and scarcely had Villiers and Blacker mounted the stairs when Pearce emerged from his hiding-place. He paused to listen, but every thing was silent. Once he faltered and relented, but the sound of some person's footsteps coming down the stairs drove the doubt from his mind; and the first thing which Blacker heard, on his entering the lower room, was the double locking of the door from without, and instantly afterwards the barring of the shutters.

"Mr. P——" but he checked himself before he uttered the word. "Is that you? is that you? Let me out."

But there was no answer. He rushed to the back door, which opened into a little court, but that also was locked and fastened: he shook it, but the door was firmly closed. Once more he went round to the front door, and endeavoured to open it, or to induce Pearce, if there, to undo it; but both his efforts were unsuccessful. He tried the window, but it was small; and in a place very subject to robbery, iron stancheons had been firmly fixed across it, which defied all egress as well as ingress.

"Is this a joke?" he said to himself. But a little reflection on the nature of the game which Pearce with himself was playing, and on the thoroughly reckless character of the gang with whom he was surrounded and identified, prohibited him from indulging such a thought. He once more shook the door, tried to batter open its panels, called upon Pearce, but all in vain. He sat down and rubbed his eyes and his forehead, from which a sweat was breaking in a cold dew. Then he remembered Pearce's unusual agitation. He recalled to mind how willing he had been to sacrifice Wheeler the moment he found him dangerous. A moment's re-

flection convinced him that as little scruple would be shown in sacrificing himself; and, resuming his quick thought and energy with the emergency, he hastened instantly into Bentley's room.

It is a hard and a false thing to suppose that any persons, however degraded in society or lost in principle, are lost utterly: good feelings are not so easily eradicated. And Blacker, notwithstanding his alarm for himself, had the thoughtfulness to call Villiers out of the room, and explain to him the danger of their position, so as not to alarm Bentley.

"There is no time to be lost, sir," he said. "I cannot venture to stay here myself, and I would recommend you to follow my example. It cannot be for any good that any one should wish to catch us in such a trap as this."

"I do not leave this place," said Villiers, "without Mr. Bentley; and you must do as you like."

"But Mr. Bentley, sir, cannot be moved; he is too weak. And if he could, how is he to get out? Perhaps I or you might be able to drop out of the upper window; but he could never do it."

"And what do you apprehend?" asked Villiers. "Surely, in a country like England, we need not fear any outrage of the kind you seem to suspect?"

"Sir," said Blacker, hastily, "it is too late to argue. But I see you know nothing of the state of this part of the country; and it is all over with me, whether I speak or not. But we are on the eve of a break-out, and Mr. Bentley knows all about it; and if he got away home, every thing would come out; and rather than that he, or any friend of his, should give warning, there are men here who would not scruple at any thing. It is a miracle that he was not put out of the way at the first, only that he was always good and kind to the poor, and poor himself; and we have no war except with the rich."

"Outbreak!" said Villiers, alarmed. "Do you mean an insurrection?"

"Yes, sir, I mean a regular insurrection, or whatever you please to call it. And now, sir, will you think of moving, before they come and find us here?"

"I do not leave this place," repeated Villiers, "without Mr. Bentley."

"Then, sir, you cannot leave it at all, that's clear; and I must be off. Do not think, sir, that I meant you any harm by bringing you into this scrape. If you will follow me, I think I can get out; but if not, you must take your chance—and a bad chance it is."

Villiers was now alive to the full danger of their situation. He was satisfied, from Blacker's manner, that he was not a party to any evil design upon him, and was himself in peril. "Stop a moment," he said, "while I return to Mr. Bentley."

In a few words he suggested to Bentley the possibility of escape, if he could summon strength and courage. "Could he dress?"

And Bentley, half bewildered and terrified, rose from the bed and endeavoured to put on his clothes, like one awakened from a dream. He was scarcely conscious of his wound, or of the weakness which had followed it. Villiers found his clothes for him lying on a chair; only one thing was missing, but this the most important—his shoes. Blacker, who had by this time come into the room to say that he could wait no longer, was surprised to find Bentley all but prepared to depart. "But how," he exclaimed, "are we to get him out of the window?"

"Look for the shoes down stairs," said Villiers.

And as Blacker crept down, and found them lying under a dresser, he heard footsteps also and voices close at the door.

"It's too late," he whispered, "too late—they are come; better stay still, and make the best of it. I'll stand your friend—I'll tell the truth—I'll say that ——" He was going to mention Pearce's name, but the consciousness of his complete powerlessness to resist the artifices and designs of such a man, for whatever purpose contrived, struck him dumb. "Hush!" he said; "they are at the door." And he endeavoured to peep behind the curtain without being seen, and to ascertain how many there were.

"If there are only two or three, sir, why we may be a match for them."

His suggestion was right. Pearce, with whom it was a paramount maxim of policy to do no evil himself which he could procure to be done by others, and to keep himself concealed like a spider at the bottom of his web, while he threw his nets around him to entangle his victims, as if by their own agency, the moment he had fastened the door, had retired to a little distance, and from thence had despatched a boy, whom he accidentally met, with such a message to the leader of the gang as he knew would bring them to the spot. But only three had come, and had come unprovided with weapons. Pearce himself would have made a fourth; but it would by no means have suited his purpose to take any part except that of a seeming by-stander in the issue, whatever it might be. The party were ignorant of the real state of the case; but were surprised and alarmed to find the door bolted and barred, and no answer returned to their knockings. And while deliberating what they should do, Pearce stole from his concealment, tapped one of them on the shoulder, unseen by the others, and withdrawing him to a little distance, said a few words to him, and then hastily retired. But they were amply suffi-

cient. And while two of the ruffians remained quietly watching the door, the other went off for a reinforcement. None of them said any thing but a muttered oath, but their eyes exchanged looks of the most determined and savage ferocity; and they shook hands and exchanged signs, as if to pledge and assure each other of their determination to hesitate at nothing.

In the meanwhile Villiers had listened, but all was silent; and thinking it possible that the former might have been a false alarm, he once more resolved to attempt their escape. Bentley was dressed, and resting upon the bed. Blacker stood at the door striving to catch every sound; but hearing nothing, he concluded also himself that the party had retired for some purpose, and that they might still have time. "Follow me," he said. And he led them into a little low garret, which occupied a small gable at the back of the building. With a strong hand he tore away the decayed lattice; and showing Villiers a low shed which lay about eight feet underneath, asked him if he could drop upon that, and support himself on the sloping roof while he assisted Bentley to do the same. Villiers, full of strength and activity, and, as a soldier, accustomed to exertion of all kinds, hesitated not a moment. He dropped on the tiles without disturbing more than one, but this rattled and fell to the ground; and a low growl, as of a mastiff dog uneasy in his sleep, was heard just beneath them. Bentley himself, now thoroughly master of his senses, slid, by the aid of Blacker, through the window, and was received safely in Villiers's arms; Blacker himself followed. And creeping along the ridge of the roof, he showed Villiers a water-butt, by which, with care and dexterity, it might be easy to descend. In this, in fact, there was but little difficulty.

"We shall then," whispered Blacker, "be in a little back yard, between the court and the works; and there is a gate which we can easily force, and then reach the open fields, where we can make play for it." Silently and steadily Villiers dropped from the shed to the water-butt; but, as he grasped it, the rotten supports on which it rested tottered, and nearly gave way. At this moment a noise was heard at the door of the building. Before Villiers could warn Bentley to descend with caution, he had hurried down, slipped on the edge of the butt, and the whole, with a tremendous crash, tumbled over to the ground, throwing Bentley upon his face, and deluging Villiers with the water. Neither had recovered themselves, when an immense mastiff, which was kennelled underneath, sprang to the full length of his chain with a tremendous barking. He leaped, and tossed, and rolled over, when caught by his collar, as, maddened with rage, he flew first at one and then at the other. His kennel lay close to the gate, which offered the only egress from the little court into which they had fallen; and Blacker, who still hung upon the ledge of the roof, gave himself up for lost. Villiers, however, heard the tramp of feet coming up the lane, and bade him jump down without delay. "We must shoot the dog: I have pistols with me." But, just as he was taking one out, the animal threw all his strength into one desperate plunge, his chain broke, and, before Villiers could seize his pistol, the brute had fastened on his chest, and was dragging him to the ground. Villiers felt its teeth in his flesh; but he remained quite cool.

"Open the gate," he said to Blacker, "and do you and Mr. Bentley get out while I manage the dog. Do not mind me." And, while he was still grappling with the mastiff, he had the satisfaction

to see the gate open. But it opened from the wrong side.

“Well done, Growler! Hollo! here they are!” were the unwelcome words which came from the ruffian who had opened it. “Well done, Growler! hold him fast!” But at this instant Villiers mastered his pistol, and fired. The shot grazed the head of the mastiff, but no more; and Villiers, finding that it still retained its hold, threw down the pistol, grasped the neck of the animal with both his hands, and, nearly choking it, compelled it to loose its hold. He hurled it down violently on the ground, close at the feet of the ruffian who had just appeared; and the animal, on recovering itself, sprang furiously upon the man’s face, as the first object that offered, and in a moment pulled him down, roaring for help, and vainly endeavouring to pacify the animal, whose fangs were buried in his cheek. Not an instant was to be lost; Blacker seized Villiers by one hand, and Bentley by the other, and dragging them up the steep side of a heap of slag, so that their figures might not be seen against the sky, he hurried them into a deep hole on the other side, and down a rugged path into a narrow lane.

“Now, run for our lives! straight on,” he said.

“Can you run?” said Villiers to Bentley.

“Yes, yes; make haste,” replied Bentley; but he was evidently sinking.

“Give him this,” said Blacker; and he pulled a flask of brandy out of his pocket, and made him take a considerable quantity. “Come on now.” And Villiers, seizing Bentley by the arm, and almost lifting him along the ground, followed Blacker down the lane.

“If we get round that corner,” said Blacker, as they paused for an instant to take breath, “we are

safe." At this moment they heard steps behind them.

"Go on," said Villiers, "yourself, with this gentleman. I have my pistols, and will bar the way against any of them: hurry on!" And fixing himself in a favourable position, against the wall, he calmly awaited the pursuers. They came up, running as in chase, two of them, and armed; each, as far as their figures could be seen in the dark, of a stout athletic frame. The first thought of Villiers was to fire at once. He closed his eyes, uttered a short prayer, and was preparing to take aim, when he paused to reflect that the life of a fellow-creature was not to be destroyed until the last emergency; and that it was better to trust to the protection of Providence than to an arm of flesh. "I will not fire," he said, "till compelled." But he had scarcely made the resolution when a third man sprang upon him from the other side of the wall; and he found himself disarmed and powerless, in the hands of — three policemen.

CHAPTER VII.

Two hours after that Villiers was standing by the side of Bentley's bed, at the Blake Arms, watching his disturbed sleep, and ready to supply him, for the last time, with any thing he might want before he himself retired to rest. His own breast, which had been savagely lacerated by the dog, had been dressed by a surgeon, but was still exquisitely painful. Bevan, who had been suffering during Villiers's absence tortures of anxiety, but who had not ventured to disobey his injunction to abstain from following him, had also gladly lain down, with a mind relieved, and a body wearied with his previous agitation. The keeper was placed in a double-bedded room with Blacker, who had declared himself a lost man if he ever returned to the pits again; and whom Villiers had made as happy as his anxious position admitted by a promise of providing for him. The clock ticked gently on the stairs, and all the inmates of the house lay buried in sleep, without the slightest apprehension of any danger—all but one. To the keeper's infinite disgust and annoyance, Blacker tossed and rolled from side to side, and finding himself unable to rest, would fain have prevented the keeper also from sleeping by a variety of questions, which, however, met no answer but a heavy snore. Several times he rose from his bed, and opened the window, stretching out his head to catch any sound which might come upon the wind. "How I wish," he exclaimed at last, "that morning were here! Is not that the

dawn?" But at that moment the clock struck two, and, with a beating heart, Blacker returned to his pillow.

Villiers himself was not wholly comfortable. He also stopped on the stairs, to listen if he could hear any noise in the distance; and did not forget to lay his loaded pistols on his dressing-table. He had easily satisfied the policemen that there was no necessity to apprehend him, as running away after committing some offence, which they had at first suspected; and he had ordered them to overtake Blacker and Bentley, which was easily done just as Bentley was fainting, and Blacker could no longer support him. Together they carried him to the inn; but the conversation which Villiers then had with the superintendent was by no means satisfactory. Clever, active, acute, and sensible, the superintendent was perfectly aware that mischief was working round him. His means, however, of detection or repression were very limited. He did not hesitate to inform Villiers that he had privately written to obtain a small military force, which might assist him on any emergency. But the whole district was so remote, its population had been gathered together so suddenly, there was such a total absence of any resident gentlemen to organise or direct resistance to a popular disturbance, and the mass of vice, intemperance, and ferocity was so fearful, that he expressed no little uneasiness, if any explosion should occur. "One thing," he said, "he was assured of, that some other agency was employed in preparing for it besides what might be expected in a population of the kind. Communications in a foreign language had been traced; men of education were frequently seen in intercourse with the workmen. There was no scarcity of money; and he remarked, also, that great efforts

were making to introduce some Romish establishments in the place. A chapel had been built, and a nunnery. But, this perhaps," he continued, "was not surprising, when the people had been so entirely abandoned by the Church. Papists were not to blame for endeavouring to give them some notions of religion. Better to be papists than heathens!"

And Villiers sighed, as he assented. He pressed the superintendent to take some refreshment, but the officer was evidently anxious and wished to depart. He asked a second time for Villiers's statement of what had passed, and what he had heard; and noted it down upon paper. As he left the room, Villiers observed that his eye was making observations on the size of the hall, the position of the staircase, the direction of the doors.

"You have been a soldier, I suppose?" said Villiers.

"Yes, sir; in the Second Dragoons."

"I have been in the army, also," said Villiers; and he was a little surprised at the man's answer. "Thank God! sir. Then, perhaps, you may be of use to us. If you are going to bed, sir, I think I should advise you to lock the doors of these rooms." He himself tried the handle of another, which led into the back yard.

"This is not a bad place," he said, smiling, "for a defence, if ever we should come to that. However, I must not stop. I wish you a good night, sir. If I should hear any thing, you won't be surprised at my returning."

"Certainly not," said Villiers; and they shook hands, and parted. Villiers called after him, to ask him one question.

"Do you think," he said, "it would be advisable for us to leave this place immediately, and not to wait till the morning?"

The officer paused to think. But a little reflection convinced them both that Bentley could not be moved without imminent danger; and there was no conveyance in which he could be placed comfortably. There was also the risk of exposure in a dark night, along roads where it was probable that watches would be placed. And re-assured by the officer's expression of a hope that there was nothing to apprehend that night, Villiers retired to his room. A Bible lay upon his dressing-table; and his mind became calmed as he gave up his usual time to read the evening lessons, and knelt more than his usual time to return thanks for the hand which had been stretched out to protect him in the danger from which he had just escaped. He thought, also, of the position which he should henceforth occupy as a magistrate and a landlord, — of his duties, and difficulties, and perils, surrounded as he should be by such a population. The plans which he had long been forming were now to be put in execution; and as the evils with which he would have to contend were brought more closely under his eye, their magnitude appalled him; and the powerlessness of any single arm to encounter them tempted him at one moment to think of abandoning them altogether, but, at the next, they induced him to take refuge from all anxieties in the simple resolution to do his duty in his own province, and to the utmost of his means, without vainly attempting to calculate consequences, which must depend on a higher power. It was this principle which gave to all his movements such quietness and composure, even amidst the utmost activity. It quieted and composed him now; and though he hesitated for a moment, he resolved at last to undress, and endeavour to obtain some sleep, instead of lying down, as he had first contemplated, in his clothes, that he might be ready

for any emergency. But he had scarcely taken off his coat, when the door-bell of the inn rang violently.

At this point it may be well to return, for a moment, to the chief agent in all this plot. As soon as he had insinuated, rather than explained, to one of the party who first came up to the door, that there was a necessity for a reinforcement, and for coming provided with the best arms they could find, he slunk back to his concealment in a shed which fronted the house. He was triumphant; all his plans had been successful; all his instruments had proved docile and pliant to his hand. His machinery had played smoothly, stroke upon stroke, without an embarrassment or a flaw. As a mere game, as a trial of skill, an exercise of power, the achievement was full of satisfaction. But the mystery and secrecy in which he hugged himself, while he saw his tools risking their lives, and all at his disposal, without being able to involve him in their own peril, thrilled him to the quick. His face almost assumed a cast of dignity from the consciousness of the power which he possessed. His eyes lighted up as he reflected that, whatever was the result, the game must turn to his own advantage. It was one of the deepest, and at the same time the most difficult and perilous parts of the policy in which he had been initiated, so to combine the threads of his stratagems that if one should fail he might easily grasp the others. Singleness of aim was foreign to all his operations. With the religious and political plots in which he was involved he had mixed up his own private intrigues and revenge; and he never lost sight of either. To embarrass an obnoxious ministry, to further the cause of his religion, or, as it should rather be said, of his fraternity, to revenge

himself on Villiers, to recover a command over some of those necessary tools, who were beginning to waver in their dependence — all were in his mind parts of one great scheme, twisted together like cords in a single rope. But the predominant thought at this moment was revenge. It was very sweet. He had found his courage waver, and his conscience begin to rouse itself, beneath the cold, dark, dreary solitude in which he had been waiting. And he had drunk — he who in his ordinary habits refrained from all indulgence of the kind, lest he should be led to forget and commit himself. He was now fortified. And if in any wandering of thought his mind fell upon ideas which made him falter, he lashed himself into the full tide of passion again by calling up images of past days, of a foreign clime, of hopes which had been blighted, of enjoyments which had been snatched from him, and of insult offered him, by the man whom he had now within his grasp. And when such thoughts failed to restore the uncompunctious triumph in which he would fain revel, there was an anodyne ready at hand. He himself was doing nothing. If blows were struck, or violence offered, he was not the guilty actor. It would be the deed of others; and his conscience (such was the morality in which he had been educated) would remain clear. And after all, it was for the good of the Church. He was obeying his spiritual superior. He could obtain absolution. If any one had asked him what precisely he expected to be the issue of the rencounter which he had contrived, he would have found it difficult to answer; for he had never dared to face fully the probability which, fearful as it was, lay lurking at the bottom of his thoughts. He knew that the hounds whom he had let loose upon their prey were strong, quick-scented, fero-

cious, and not to be daunted by any fear of blood. He believed that their prey itself was driven into a corner—all but chained to a stake. He knew, also, that if any accident (for accident he continued to call it) should remove Villiers from the world, he had the means in his power of securing wealth and power beyond his most sanguine wishes, provided only he could recover from Wheeler, in whose hands he believed it to exist, a single packet of mysterious and important documents. This was one vision which opened to him. On the other hand was the chance, nay, certainty, of involving Wheeler himself in some fresh difficulty and crime, which would place him more completely at his disposal. But there was also a third. He had received that morning orders to hasten, by every means in his power, the outbreak which had long been preparing in that part of England. Its ultimate success was hopeless; its object idle, so far as the apparent agents and movers were concerned. But for these no care was entertained by parties behind the curtain, who employed them as puppets, for their own ulterior and more extensive designs. An insurrectionary movement was required just then in that quarter to aid a political negotiation, in which the emissaries of Rome, or rather of his fraternity, were engaged; and it was to be procured at any sacrifice. Pearce knew well how soon a fray may be turned, when minds are heated and materials well laid, into a rebellion; and he felt as a man who had set fire to a train, and was now waiting in safety for its explosion. With these imaginations he solaced himself while watching the approach of Wheeler's additional party, his face laid close to the little window of the shed in which he had ensconced himself. The delay was shorter than he had expected. They came in quite sufficient strength to master any re-

sistance. He saw bludgeons in their hands : he had little doubt that more formidable weapons were concealed about them. His breath heaved quicker as they proceeded to unbar the door. At that instant the barking of the dog broke upon him, and he listened on tip-toe, with his face pressed close on the window, and his blood almost ceasing to flow. There was a stir at the door of the house, and figures appeared coming back, as if in search of something, and dispersing themselves in different directions. The pistol-shot was fired, and he heard a shout. His knees tottered, his breath went, all his blood seemed to rush at once to his heart and smother him. The end — was it come? For one moment his conscience awoke in all its force, and flew at him like a tiger ; and if any one could have seen his face, they would have read in it the agony of a damned soul. He staggered into the air, leaned against the door-post, while the cold wind sweeping across his head, from which his hat had fallen, revived him, and changed the current of his thoughts ; and in that position he saw the party issue from the house ; and as one of them hastened past, he managed, as if unconcernedly, to ascertain from him that the prisoners had escaped.

“ All?” asked Pearce.

“ Yes, all.” His first thought was to thank the fortune which had saved him from the gratification of his wishes. But the demon-spirit rushed back to his heart, and he felt that every thing was a blank. As another of the pursuers ran past the doorway in which he was standing, he felt as if he would willingly have joined in the chase. But even when scarcely master of his reason, he was retained mechanically by the habitual reserve which he had practised in abstaining from any direct participation in the plots which he was weaving. At one time

he thought of retiring, and leaving it to the next day to ascertain results, and discover in what way they might be turned to his advantage. He had forgotten, in the thought of Villiers, that Blacker was with him, had fled with him,—had therefore betrayed himself, or could betray him, not only to Villiers, but to Wheeler. Even *his* mind, under strong emotion, had been unable to retain all the complication of his manœuvres; but, like a chess-player who, at the moment when the game seems decided, discovers a move which had been overlooked—or, rather, as a gambler stripped of every thing, and roused from his stupor of despair by finding another piece of gold thrust into his hand to recommence his play,—he no sooner recollected Blacker than he started up, and recovering all the powers of his mind, plunged once more into his calculations of intrigue, and paced slowly, with his arms folded, before the door of the little shed. Just as his course was taken (and it was taken with a rapidity and determination worthy a better cause), on turning upon his heel to strike down a dark passage, he was confronted suddenly by Wheeler, breathless, and infuriated with disappointment and alarm.

“Is this any work of yours, Mr. Pearce?” exclaimed the ruffian, with an oath. “You are a man of many names and many ways. I say, sir, have you had any hand in this? I tell you, you shall answer for it with your life. There’s not a man shall come here stealing and sneaking about, and like a cowardly rascal putting other people’s fingers in the fire, while he is afraid to show his face himself, be he who he may. I’ll not stand it, sir! We’ll none of us stand it! Hollo! Jack, here seize this fellow!”

And one of his companions came up, and together

they collared Pearce, and dragged him down the gateway. Pearce's blood ran cold within him. Wheeler was furious, was armed, was half intoxicated. His nervous muscular grasp had seized Pearce by the throat, so that he could neither move nor speak. He knew that Wheeler hated and feared him—had imposed upon him—had obtained possession of documents on which all his own prospects depended,—that he was acknowledged by all the gangs of ruffians implicated in the approaching outbreak as their head and captain,—that he was full of jealousy and resentment at the endeavour which Pearce had made to supplant him by Blacker,—that he was desperate at the danger in which he was involved by the escape of Bentley,—and had long since discarded every shadow of scruple at the commission of any crime. Wheeler's clutch gripped him like the claw of a tiger, and every moment he expected to be struck down. He stood perfectly motionless; and Wheeler, finding no resistance, bade his companion go and tell Roberts to find out that brute Connell, and bring him by the neck to the "Black Lion," and then come back. He could manage Pearce in the meantime. And slightly slackening his hold, so that Pearce recovered the power of speaking, he presented a pistol to his head, and bade him not stir for his life. It was not necessary to give such a caution. Pearce, with his thorough knowledge of human nature, was perfectly aware that his only course was to avoid motion, look, or word, which could keep up the excitement under which Wheeler was labouring. Sand, he often had said to himself—soft, yielding, shifting sand, is the only effectual barrier against the waves of an Atlantic. By a strong effort he threw his mind into a totally different train of thought, as if all that had happened, and especially

all that he had done himself, had never been ; and by this means he both recovered his coolness and was able the better to assume the appearance of surprise and innocence. But his first anxiety was to ascertain whether Wheeler's attack and accusation was a mere ebullition of drunken passion and jealousy, or was founded on any discovery of his own communication with Blacker.

"Mr. Wheeler," he said, calmly (he used this formality in addressing him, knowing that with an exasperated mind it is necessary to preserve a distance, and that too near an approach or affectation of friendship only increases the irritation), "Mr. Wheeler, you have just been grievously injured, and like other men you fall into a passion with the first person you meet, even though he is a friend. But I know what has happened, and can easily forgive you. Tell me, is there any chance of catching them?"

"None," growled Wheeler ; and Pearce knew that he had gained his first move. He had induced his enemy to answer him a direct question by putting one which only required a monosyllable for reply. It was the first step to a regular parley ; and this once obtained, Pearce knew that he could manage all the rest.

"How many were there?" asked Pearce.

"Three," said Wheeler, sulkily ; and his hand relaxed its grasp on Pearce's collar.

"Which way did they go?" asked Pearce. But the question was injudicious. It roused Wheeler's passion by compelling him to declare his ignorance, and to speak at length ; and he answered fiercely, with an oath, "How should I know? I believe if there's a man in this place knows, it's yourself." And Pearce felt the grasp of his hand tighten, and the muzzle of the pistol approach nearer to his fore-

head ; but he was assured that Blacker had not been taken, and his course was now clear.

“Wheeler,” he said, with coolness, “why all this violence? What right have you to suspect me of doing this mischief, when you know that I was the person who sent word to bring you here? I happened to be here. I saw two men enter. I barred the door behind them, and sent off at once to you ; and in return for this, here you are threatening to shoot me. Put down your pistol, man, and be calm.”

It was his first step to re-assume the tone of command which he had always asserted over Wheeler as over others ; and to his great satisfaction he found the charm was not lost. The pistol was lowered, and Pearce began to breathe more freely. At this moment footsteps were heard in the lane, and Wheeler moved as if to look out. A man of less tact than Pearce would have made an effort to escape. Instead of this he laid his hand softly on Wheeler’s arm, and whispered,—“Stay here, don’t move ; it may be a policeman :” and once more Wheeler obeyed the suggestion. It showed an absence of fear, and anticipated his own intention ; and Pearce knew that to obtain submission generally, we must begin by requiring what there is no objection to grant. It brought Wheeler’s mind also, though only in a trifling act, into accordance with Pearce ; and thus it was a step towards a renewal of sympathy. All this had been taught to Pearce by the men under whose skilful direction he had been brought up, and still more by his own practical experience of human nature. He was once more playing a game—a game of intrigue,—fishing, as he profanely expressed it, for men, or rather getting a savage animal whose claw was on his throat into his net, not by hounds and spears, but by swooth words and a gentle hand.

"Draw back," he again whispered. "Let us stand in the shade — closer to me — here," and Wheeler found himself drawing to the side of the man whom a few minutes before he was prepared to shoot dead upon the spot. Here was association and communion.

"Are they passed?" whispered Pearce.

"Yes," replied Wheeler, in a whisper; and this secret communication into which the ruffian was drawn, almost without being aware of it, completed Pearce's charm. The pistol was dropt, the grasp on his collar removed, and now all that remained for Pearce was to bend once more to his will, and use as his tool, the man whom he knew would not have scrupled to be his murderer.

"Wheeler," he said, "it is not safe for us to be here. Job Stuart's house was broken open last night; and there are three policemen watching round in this direction. Let us walk quietly away. Do not hurry — take hold of my arm."

Wheeler hesitated; and looked at him suspiciously, and once more put his hand into his pocket to seize his pistol.

"None of your tricks, Mr. Pearce; I know you well. Leave go my arm."

It was now Pearce's time to affect anger and resentment. He thrust Wheeler's arm from him with just sufficient violence to indicate passion in himself without provoking it in his companion. "Go your way, man," he said, — "go your way. What is to become of all your great plans and bold undertakings if the leader of them can't distinguish between his friends and his foes? How do you think you'll ever be able to keep your men together, or do your job, if you give way to these foolish jealousies and suspicions? What is it to me whether you walk with me or not? I am going to the Black Lion. Do you choose to come?"

And Pearce walked on while Wheeler followed sulkily, yet unable to quarrel with the proposal, since it was the very place to which he was going himself, and where his comrades were assembled. In all this Pearce had shown the judgment not to think of removing Wheeler's suspicions by any argument or evidence. He knew that minds heated and bewildered cannot follow reason, and do not require it. Like huge rocking stones, they will vibrate beneath a touch when the strongest levers are unable to dislodge them. He walked on steadily at his usual pace, not sorry that Wheeler should follow, since he knew that even such a trifling circumstance as this had an influence upon the mind in infecting it with a feeling of inferiority. At the same time he took care that no occasion should be given to rouse Wheeler's still floating suspicion that he intended to make off and escape, in which case Pearce was sufficiently assured that a bullet might probably follow him. He therefore took care to look back once or twice, and ask, "Well, are you coming?" At a corner of the streets where it was necessary to turn, he stopped and whistled unconcernedly, and at another he stooped down to tie his shoe, until all thought of his running away was removed from Wheeler's mind. But he was scarcely prepared for Pearce's next step. When he himself came up with him at the "Black Lion," Pearce entered at once into the long room—a sort of club-room, furnished with deal tables, and pipes for smoking, and spitting dishes, and a gorgeous apparatus of a state-chair, hung with coarse tawdry red and orange, and curiously surmounted with various devices. The whitewashed walls were garnished with mottoes and sundry symbols of Justice, Temperance, Fortitude, and other Christian virtues, for whose encouragement it was generally supposed that the

F. Lodge, like all the other Lodges of the Hawkstone Odd and Even Brotherhood, had been established, and in which its members especially delighted. It was, in fact, one of the religious orders of the nineteenth century, springing from the same love of exclusiveness and sociality, bound by vows, useful in an economical view, giving importance to the poor, and the dignity of office to the mean. One element was omitted—the Church. In the room were assembled a number of pitmen in their better clothes, workmen from the founderies, and a few better-dressed persons who seemed strangers; and the president's chair being empty, they had formed groups, and were severally discussing questions of politics with looks and allusions of no very peaceable significance. It was one—one, it may be hoped, among the few low associations of the kind, which had been converted into a political club, and from that into an organised society for sedition; and all the persons present were privy to the designs which were in progress, and were bound by oaths like that which had been administered to Bentley in the mine, not only to secrecy, but to co-operation. As Pearce appeared at the door he was hailed with loud applause. However careful the veil which he had thrown over his personal objects, and the separation which he had maintained between himself and the actual operations of the gang, his influence and importance were generally known; and the very mystery in which he shrouded himself heightened his consequence, while all doubt of his trustworthiness was removed by the command which he exercised over the leaders. He walked therefore into the room with a firm and even haughty step, and every one giving way as he advanced, he took his stand at the top, by the seat which was destined for the presiding genius of these treasonable orgies.

Wheeler followed, but with a confused and bewildered air, and would have stepped into the seat of authority as the president, but Pearce put his arm before him to prevent him; and arresting him just as he was on the step, he turned to the assemblage, and with a rapping on the table called their attention to what he wished to address to them. Wheeler paused with the rest — to listen. He was more than surprised, he was astounded, by hearing Pearce, in a fluent off-handed speech, explain to the *gentlemen* present the fact of the escape of Bentley, which few were yet acquainted with, and the manner in which he had himself been treated by Wheeler. He then quietly appealed to two men present, of whom one had received the message which Pearce himself had forwarded, to apprise the gang that Villiers and Blacker had entered the house; the other had received from him the communication respecting the necessity of a reinforcement to the party. It had been no slight part of Pearce's plan to provide himself with these witnesses from the first, in case his treachery should be discovered; and the manœuvre succeeded. Wheeler stood confounded, half angry, half ashamed, yet still unable to cast away all suspicion, so thoroughly was he convinced of the depth and artfulness of all Pearce's proceedings. He looked round to see what impression had been made, and was satisfied, that although there was a reluctance and fear to express any feeling against himself, they regarded his conduct as unjustifiable, and Pearce's character as cleared. Pearce himself, with an eye quick as lightning, perceived the state of their minds, and how far he might count on their support.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, after a pause, "I think you'll forgive me if I objected to this gentleman taking the chair of this honourable society, of

which friendship and good fellowship are the motto, until he had ——”

“Made an apology,” interrupted some voice. “’Pology, ’pology,” were faintly uttered by some of the more moderate of the audience at the farther end of the room, who sat enveloped in a cloud of tobacco-smoke; but the demand was not taken up by that general acclamation which might have been expected. The men stood in awe of Wheeler as well as of Pearce, and dared not irritate either. In a moment Pearce caught his line.

“No,” he said, “gentlemen, I want no apology. This gentleman is your captain, and he was and is still my friend; but I do want him, before he ascends that chair, to tell me before you that he no longer suspects me of wishing to injure him, or of being a traitor to your noble cause.”

“Hear, hear, hear! hurrah! that’s noble—that’s just like a gentleman!” exclaimed the whole room, relieved from the dilemma to which they had been reduced.

“Shake hands, shake hands!” and Pearce stretching out his own hand, which Wheeler was obliged to take, though not without a shrug of the shoulder and a look of bitter suspicion, he lifted him into the chair, and stood by him with much the same attitude (to compare little things and great) with which the protector of a kingdom might stand by the throne of an infant sovereign, whom he was permitting to exercise the regal function.

These are little details, but human nature is the same in courts and cottages; and the skill and ingenuity practised by Pearce in a pot-house, he had learnt from men who at the same time were practising the very same principles in influencing the rulers of nations—rulers in palaces, as, by the con-

stitution of England, the members of the F. Lodge have become its rulers in cabins.

"And now, gentlemen," resumed Pearce, after a little pause, during which Wheeler was recovering his self-importance, "I beg your pardon for intruding upon you; and as I know you must have some weighty things to think of, now your excellent captain, and indeed all of you, have been brought into this jeopardy, I think I had better withdraw."

His words were cautiously weighed, that they might sound as a question whether it would be better or not that he should leave them; and he paused for an answer.

"No, stay, stay; we shall want your advice," was the general outcry; and Pearce did not wait to have it repeated.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, "since you wish me to be a looker-on, you know that, though I have business of my own which prevents me from taking any part in your proceedings, my heart is with you, and always will be; and I certainly am very much concerned that this vile treachery should have exposed the life of your excellent captain, and indeed, I may say, the lives of all of you, as it has. But I should think the best thing would be to find out at once who is the traitor. Do not you think so, captain?" and he appealed, with an aside, to Wheeler, who, he saw, was becoming impatient with his interference, and uneasy to resume his own authority as the first personage in the room. "It's not my business," he continued aloud, "to advise, when it would be done so much better by your own president; but there is a person here, I think, who could give him some information."

And as a cat would torment a mouse, Pearce, with his eye looking significant, + Cookesley, who

quailed under it, and turned as pale as ashes, asked him to tell the captain what he knew about the matter. Cookesley's heart sank within him, his lips quivered, his eyes cowered, as he raised his head from his arms with which he had been resting on the table, and with a supplicating look at Pearce he endeavoured to commence some stammering accounts. It was not the mere sport of inflicting torture, though this raised a smile and a sneer on Pearce's hard features, but the policy of exercising power, which induced him to drag Cookesley forward. But he intended nothing more than to terrify the unhappy man; and having shown what mischief he could do, to excite his greater gratitude and dependence, by leaving him at last in safety. It was at once his delight and policy at times to seize one of his unhappy dependants, and hold him, as it were, over a precipice, threatening to drop him. He saw, however, from Cookesley's alarm, that it would not be safe to trifle with it, lest his unhappy victim should betray himself. He interrupted him, therefore, before a second word was out of his mouth.

"I think," he said, "you told me that you saw Mr. Villiers, was it not, come into Howlas, riding with a groom, or something of the kind?"

"Yes," said Cookesley, hesitating.

"And that, afterwards, he came down to the Horton works, and asked you to show him over them. Was not that right?"

"Yes," faltered Cookesley, trembling for the next question, but still hoping much from seeing that Pearce was himself making up a story. "And then you thought it right to let me know what he had said to you; that he had been making inquiries about a gentleman who had met with an accident, and sounded you to know if you had heard any thing

about it; and said something of a magistrate and a warrant?"

"Ay, ay," cried two of the black begrimed furnace-men from the other end of the room. "We heard him say that, didn't we?" And they appealed to each other. "We thought there was something in the wind."

"And so did you, Mr. Cookesley, did you not, when you thought it your duty to tell me as soon as you could?" said Pearce.

Cookesley, half exulting like a reprieved criminal, half afraid, half unwilling to tell a direct lie, and bewildered with the tricks of Pearce, like a fly who felt himself entangled in a spider's web, which yet it was too dark to see, only ventured to assent by nodding his head.

Pearce looked round, as much as to ask if any doubt could be entertained of the author of the mischief. He then engaged Wheeler, who almost growled as he turned his head to listen to him, in a whispering conversation. At the close of which, as if revealing the result of a confidential deliberation, he said, aloud, "Your excellent captain and I know this Mr. Villiers well; and you could not have a more dangerous man to deal with—could we?" And he turned to Wheeler, who sulkily assented.

"Now then," Pearce suggested aside to Wheeler, "find out who is absent."

Wheeler, scarcely recovered from his intoxication and his passion—alarmed at the personal consequences of Bentley's escape—cowed and disordered by the mistake which he had made with respect to Pearce, was to be recovered and brought up to the proper pitch of energy necessary for the object which Pearce had in view. And the proper mode of recovering him was to engage him in some of the routine duties of his office. He accordingly

began to call over the names; and, in doing it, to resume his usual feeling of importance and determination.

"Smith."

"He's sick," answered a voice.

"Corbet."

"He's gone down to Hawkstone to see his brother."

"Connell. Where's Connell? Has any one brought Connell with him?" exclaimed Wheeler, furiously, as if sure of his treachery.

"Connell, sir, I know is away at Barton Mills," said two or three voices. "He went away at six this morning." And Wheeler looked as a bear from whom its prey had just been torn. Four more names were called, and an excuse given for each. Blacker's came next.

"Blacker. Mr. Blacker."

"Ha!" exclaimed Pearce, loud enough to be heard by all the room. "Ha, Mr. Blacker! is not he here?" he repeated; and he put his finger to his lips, as if in thought. "Has any one seen Mr. Blacker?"

There was no answer.

"I saw him with you," said a pitman, who knew little of Pearce, and was therefore little daunted by his presence. "It was about three hours ago."

"With me?" exclaimed Pearce. And his first thought was to crush the speaker by one of his most ferocious looks, and compel him to retract his words. But the stout steady look with which the huge giant confronted him compelled him to alter his course."

"Yes," he said, "about three hours back, was it not, at the corner of Wych Lane?"

"Yes," said the man.

"I thought at the time," said Pearce, "when he left me, that there was something suspicious about

him. He seemed hurried, and said he had a job to do ; and when he went away, he went down towards the inn."

"I saw him go into the inn myself," said a stout active lad about sixteen, "and come out again with a gentleman."

"Ha!" exclaimed both Pearce and Wheeler, as in concert. And the former again laid his head by the side of the president's ; and, as the prospect of discovery opened on them, Wheeler's conference assumed a more cordial and confidential tone.

"Yes, yes," he said to Pearce. "You see, gentlemen," he continued, speaking aloud, and to the great satisfaction of Pearce, assuming the tone of energy which was natural to him, "Blacker is a man that we have for some time had our eye upon ; he is quick enough, and cunning, and conceited, and is always talking of being with gentlemen, and becoming a gentleman himself. I know that he has done as much as he could to injure me."

"And you will bear me out," subjoined Pearce, "that he has not scrupled to tell you many falsehoods of me, in order to make us enemies. I have had him with me often, to see if I could make any thing of him, but I have never liked the man ; he's a notorious liar for one thing, and would never hesitate to bring a charge against any one, true or false. He's just the man who, if he were caught in the fact, would swear that he was set on to it by the captain himself—or perhaps," he added, laughing, "by me. What think you, captain?"

Wheeler gave his assent, but not without a little shrug of the shoulders. "Send after Blacker, and find him out," cried Wheeler. But just at this instant (as if some secret power, according to Pearce's views, was aiding his plans) a man came in, breathless, to say, that he had just obtained information

from another, who had seen three policemen and a gentleman with Blacker himself, carrying Bentley into the inn, and that they were all there together. There was a dead silence.

"At the inn?" whispered Pearce to Wheeler. "Do they stay all night?"

"Do they stay all night?" repeated Wheeler, aloud, to the informant.

"Yes, sir, I heard it from the ostler myself. There's no chay, and the doctor has been up, and the gentleman has been hurt, and the sick person cannot be moved."

"Did you hear the gentleman's name?"

"Yes, they said it was young Mr. Villiers; they'd heard it from the keeper there, down in the park, who is come with them."

The discovery was complete; the whole assembly seemed thunderstruck. Pipes were laid down; half-tasted pots of beer were removed from the lips; eyes were turned on each other; and, to the great delight of Pearce, Wheeler jumped up from his seat with a violent imprecation, and swore that he would have his revenge.

"You are sure," said Pearce again, aloud, to the last informant, "that they stay all night? Is Blacker at the inn?"

"Yes, sir."

There was a pause.

"What o'clock is it?" said Pearce to his next neighbour.

"Only just twelve," was the answer. Wheeler himself seemed perplexed; but his spirit was up, and Pearce thought it better to make no direct effort to guide him.

"I never heard," said Pearce to his neighbour, "a more rascally thing. It's a sad thing to think of," he continued, lowering his voice; "but I would

not give five farthings for the neck of my good friend Wheeler, or the success of any of your plans, now this has broken out. You could not have a man against you who would do you more deadly mischief than young Villiers. I know him well. He is almost the only man I should ever be afraid of, except, perhaps, your own captain, when his nerve is up."

Wheeler heard every word, as it was intended that he should do.

"How many of you are there?" continued Pearce, as if carelessly.

"Four or five hundred," was the answer.

"Four or five hundred," exclaimed Wheeler, fiercely: "there are four or five thousand—yes, double and treble the number—who are with us—good men and strong. Why, this moment, in this town, there are five hundred who would follow me the moment I gave the word, are there not?"

And "Yes, yes, follow you, captain, anywhere," was the shout in reply.

Pearce stretched across, and whispered to Wheeler, "Did they say, follow you to the inn?"

"Yes," exclaimed Wheeler, fiercely and aloud, "to the inn or any where: wouldn't you, my boys?"

The words were no sooner uttered than "The inn, the inn!" rose up on all sides. The word was dropped, the idea suggested, and Pearce, preserving his countenance in its usual impassive coldness, secretly hugged himself in triumph.

"My boys!" said the captain, as if in doubt.

But Pearce, who was standing by him, began soliloquising aloud. "He is quite right; just like himself. Strike while the iron's hot. What a fine body of fellows! and what a man to head them! There's plenty of time!" And he took out his watch to look at it. He knew that many minds—

most minds—in moments of indecision, may be fixed in any resolution by taking it for granted that the resolution is made already,—minds that never like to retreat, or to be suspected of retreating, from any step on which they have once decided. Wheeler was one of this class.

“You’ll form,” said Pearce, “in three bodies, I suppose, and attack them at once. Will you fire any rockets, to let the people in Blackmore know what you are doing?”

Wheeler pushed him aside. “You are a very clever man, Mr. Pearce; but I suspect we know better how to manage these things than you do. We have gentlemen who have served in the army themselves. Leave us, if you please, to manage our own concerns.”

Pearce received the repulse with the same satisfaction with which the hand experiences the recoil of a spring which it is testing to see if it will break. He thought, however, that a little irritation was no bad mode of confirming his instrument in his resolution, and putting him wholly on his mettle by affecting a little distrust.

“Would it not be as well,” he whispered again, while Wheeler was busy in giving some orders to one of the men (he chose the moment on purpose)—“would it not be as well to send round to the works, and get the men together?”

Wheeler uttered a tremendous oath.

“Confound your interference, sir: am I not doing the very thing? I wish you would stick to your own business. I conclude we shall see nothing of you to-night.” And he looked round on Pearce with ineffable scorn.

Pearce was perfectly satisfied. The men had jumped up from their seats, and the whole room was in confusion. Wheeler had called to him three of

the stoutest and most intelligent of the party, and was engaged in giving them directions. His whole energy was aroused, and he spoke and acted with a spirit and judgment worthy of a better cause, and worthy of the National School, in which his intellect had been so sharpened and prepared; and just as he rose up in his chair to make a short but violent speech to his comrades, Pearce quietly took his hat, and slipped out of the room. At the door he beckoned a rough bloated miner to him, and telling him that, having disturbed their meeting, he was bound to leave something to make them merry, he put into their hands enough money to produce in the whole party the degree of intoxication, and therefore of recklessness and violence, necessary for the accomplishment of their work, and then he retired into the street, as the demagogues of the nineteenth century usually do retire, when fighting is about to commence.

Only one thing remained. He had fired the train, which he was assured would terminate in the required explosion; but with that explosion it was probable that he should be compelled to remove from the district. Wheeler himself might be destroyed or driven away, and with him the chance be lost of recovering the mysterious papers. How often did he reproach himself for having once permitted him to see them! Upon no other part of his proceedings could he fix the imputation of being what, with the French diplomatist, he considered worse than a crime—a blunder; and yet, he thought to himself, it was necessary to explain to him about the boy. I could never have gained command over him without showing him some confidence; and if he has played me false, why (he chuckled as he muttered) it is only what I have done to him! He despaired of recovering the documents by any influence of persuasion; he had tried this in every

shape: but Wheeler, though not aware of all the value attached to them, saw by Pearce's frequent recurrence to the subject that they were of great moment. Himself quick, intelligent, and aspiring, he growled impatiently under the superiority which Pearce assumed over him. Before he would consent to entrust him with any of his own secrets, he had insisted on being admitted into some of his partner's; and Pearce had been compelled to show him something which might explain the nature of his own proceedings, and account for the mystery attending them, and for his refusal to take an active part in the more general conspiracy. But instead of removing distrust, the knowledge thus obtained had only increased it. Wheeler saw the real nature of Pearce's character, and kept his eye fixed on all his movements, as upon a snarling dog which might at any hour turn on him and rend him; and nothing but the money with which Pearce supplied him could have preserved the continuance of their connection. He had taken advantage of a careless moment in which Pearce, not then sufficiently aware of his cunning, had left the papers in his possession, to secrete them, and pretend that they were lost. At one time he had even thought of making use of them himself; but they were comparatively valueless without further information, which none but Pearce possessed; and he was too deeply involved in the turbulent conspiracy of the district, and too deeply in the power of Pearce, to venture on such a step. All that he could do was to retain them in his own hands, as a sort of hostage or balance-weight, to preserve the equilibrium of their mutual suspicion. And the more effectually to prevent Pearce from recovering them, he had shifted his lodgings; and when it was necessary to meet, they had met at another public-house.

In this critical moment Pearce was resolved to make one more attempt. He contrived without difficulty to find out Wheeler's lodgings; easily obtained admittance to his room, on leaving the Black Lion, on pretence of wishing to see him; looked round on the closets and places in the miserable garret, for it was nothing more, in which the treasure might be concealed; and fixed his eyes especially on a deal box, closely locked and corded, in which all Wheeler's little property was contained, with many other papers of no little importance, besides the packet in question. He would have been tempted not to lose the opportunity, but to search at once; but while his eyes were furtively seeking for some means of opening the box, he heard voices in the street, and had only just time to hurry down stairs, and to meet Wheeler himself, and, as they were styled, three of his officers with him. Wheeler looked at him with surprise and suspicion, but was too full of other things to attend to him.

"They told me," said Pearce, "that I should find you at Blacker's lodgings. Is not this Blacker's lodgings?"

"No!" exclaimed Wheeler, with an oath.

"I wanted to remind you," said Pearce, "that a troop of dragoons came yesterday to Hakewell Barracks; so you had better make haste."

"Fool!" exclaimed Wheeler, "to think we do not know that!"

And Pearce, having lulled all his suspicions, once more went his way. He proceeded first to his own room, where he provided himself with certain cunning instruments, by which he was able to open any lock without detection; and then he waited patiently at his window, listening to catch any sound which might break the stillness of the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE may now return to the inn-door, which Villiers, startled by the ringing, had hastened down to open. His anticipation of its cause was too well founded. The superintendent of police, with two of his men, met him in the passage; and a few words were sufficient to apprise him that the pitmen were mustering their forces, and that an attack might be apprehended on the inn. Villiers's first thought was the possibility of transferring Bentley to some place of safety. "Was there any mode of quitting the town?" But the policemen negatived it at once. Scouts had been posted on all the roads, and round the inn; and retreat was hopeless without discovery.

"No, sir," said the superintendent; "if the attack is made, we must meet it here."

Villiers asked the number of the assailants.

Brown, the superintendent, shook his head. He had learned that the workmen in nearly all the works were gathering. They were a sturdy, desperate, and ferocious class, long banded together in a general conspiracy, and well armed, if not with fire-arms, at least with weapons still more formidable for close combat — the weapons of their own labour; and, what was still more alarming, there were among them men who had served in the army, and were well acquainted with the best mode of planning an attack.

"And how much time have we," said Villiers, "to prepare for receiving them?"

"I do not think," said Brown, "that we have more than half an hour. The men from the Binley and Powham works cannot join them in less than that. And it is late; and they have had to wake them up."

"Half an hour," said Villiers, "well employed, will do much. Call up every one in the house. Stop—not there!" he cried to the man who was hurrying to the first door on the stairs; "not there; that's Mr. Bentley's room. Do not disturb him till the last moment. How many men are there with you, Mr. Brown?"

"We have but eight, sir. One of them I have sent up to Mr. Jackson's, to see if he can muster any assistance among the better sort of people,—the shopkeepers, and so on. But they are a cowardly set; and I have no great reliance upon them, even if we could swear them in as constables. They think of nothing but making money; and making money is not the best school for learning to fight for any thing, even for their lives."

"Are there any military any where in the neighbourhood?" asked Villiers.

"Thank goodness, sir!" was the answer, "a troop of dragoons arrived yesterday at Hakewell Barracks; but that is ten miles off. One of my men is despatched for them; but he will have to cross the mountain; and the road is bad, even if he manages to get there."

"Let us have no ifs, Mr. Brown," said Villiers. "When we have to fight in a good cause, we must feel sure that all things will turn out well. There must be no doubting. How long, then, shall we have to hold out?"

"Allow three hours, said Brown.

"Allow four," said Villiers, "that we may not be

disappointed. Always give time, and prepare for the worst at once. And now for our defence."

By this time the terrified inmates of the house had been roused from their sleep; and, half-dressed — some shoeless — some with their nightcaps on — some staggering under the dizziness of fresh-broken dreams — and all open-mouthed with fright and wonder — were assembled in the bar and the passage. There was the landlord, a stout, hearty Englishman, and his wife, with one maid, and the ostler, and boots: both of whom appeared to Villiers's searching eye as men who would stand by him, and who could be trusted. No stranger was in the house but a bagman, or, as he would rather be entitled, a commercial gentleman, who came trembling down the stairs, with one hand holding up the lower part of his attire, and with the other dragging after him a heavy portmanteau. In a very few words Villiers explained to them the facts of the case; and insisted that the women should be immediately conveyed to a place of safety, and that any others who liked it should retire also.

"We must have none with us," he said aside to Brown, "but those who are with us in heart, and will stand by us."

The landlord was the first who answered. He was the son of an old tenant on the Villiers estate, had served in the yeomanry himself, and still retained his yeomanry equipments. "As sure, sir," he exclaimed, "as my name is Bonsor, I do not leave this house while you and the sick gentleman are in it! I've heard of Mr. Bentley many a time. He always did what he could for the poor; and I'll stand by him to the last; and by you, sir, for Lady Esther's sake."

Mrs. Bonsor listened to her husband, and then declared her intention of remaining also. She had

full confidence in her husband's martial qualities, and especially in his yeomanry accoutrements: she would not be driven out of her house by any set of ragamuffins. Besides, there was all the tea and the sugar, and the larder; and the rum and shrub in the bar; and the teaspoons and silver teapot; above all, there was the great china bowl, — the very pride and treasure of her life, — all of which were committed to her keeping; and, with a spirit worthy of an Englishwoman, she seated herself in her great chair, and declared that nothing should make her afraid. The poor maid trembled like an aspen leaf; but the landlady bade her take courage; and she also announced her wish to remain with her mistress. The two men-servants seized the poker and the shovel, and vowed that they would stand by the Blake Arms to the last drop of their blood. They would not see a gentleman murdered, or their master's property injured; and they did not care a straw for all the pitmen in the forest.

Villiers thanked them all in a manner which made them more than ever firm in their resolution to stand by him. He promised that their services should not be lost sight of; and encouraged them by explaining that he was himself an officer in the army, and had fought in sieges and battles before. But in the midst of his little address he was nearly pushed forward by some one creeping behind him, and striving to reach the door. It was the terrified bagman.

"I'll thank you, gentlemen, if you please, to let me out. I'm only a lodger, you know;" and he affected a laugh, which fear converted into a hiccup. "I think it better to go to the Swan. Good night, gentlemen; I hope you won't be hurt. Here, boots, will you take up my portmanteau to the Swan; take care, there's money in it." The boots opened

the door, threw his portmanteau after him into the street, and bade him get off for a cowardly sneak—an injunction which the shivering wretch, half dressed as he was, willingly proceeded to comply with, without giving way to any resentment at the imputation so unceremoniously thrown upon his heroism.

“Money, sir, again,” said Brown to Villiers. “Money—a money-making people will never fight for any thing; their soul is always in their pocket.”

It was, however, no time for philosophising—an occupation of which Mr. Brown, in his vocation, was extremely fond. Villiers, who, while he was in the army, had devoted himself with zeal to his profession, and studied it thoroughly, cast his eyes round the little garrison which he was now to maintain; and with that quick sagacity which indolent men call genius, and wise men know to be the fruit of patient study and a well-disciplined mind, he fixed on the whole plan of defence. The house was a double one, thrown back from the street, and connected with the two rows of houses on each side by a wall which formed a little recess, enclosing three sides of an open gravelled space.

“Get some pickaxes,” Villiers cried to the ostler and the boots; “knock some holes in these walls for our muskets; we can command and sweep the whole front of the house from these: and here we must take our first stand. Mrs. Bonsor, will you have the goodness, with your maid, to bring down as many featherbeds and mattresses as you can, and place them against the windows in these two front parlours; and then pile up all the loose chairs and tables and drawers, any thing you can lay hands on, in the passage here, as well as in the rooms. We are tolerably safe behind, are we not?”

Brown consulted with the landlord, and found that the stable-yard at the back was surrounded pretty nearly on all sides by stables, coach-houses, and other out-buildings, except the gate, which led into the garden, and through the garden into the fields. But this was perfectly exposed.

"It may be," said Bonsor, "that they may not come round, or think of this. We must trust this to Providence."

"No," said Villiers; "we will trust to Providence all that is beyond our own resources, but we have no authority for trusting anything to it which we can do ourselves. Keeper, when they come up, station yourself in that loft—it commands all the garden, and shoot the first man whom you see coming in that direction."

"Hollo!" cried the landlord at this moment; "my boys! I had forgotten you." And two stout hearty boys, about fourteen and fifteen, who had been overlooked in the general rousing, now joined the party, half in wonder, and still more in delight, at the prospect, as they called it, of some fun. Villiers was not sorry for the reinforcement.

"Of course, they will not leave you," he said to the father.

"I should like to see them," said Bonsor. "English boys! and be afraid of a set of thieves and ragamuffins!"

"Boys," cried Villiers, "here is your work. Do you see that heap of paving-stones? Carry as many as you can up to the upper rooms. Quick! and do not get in the way of your mother. Mr. Brown, your other men should be here by this time; you say they have plenty of ammunition."

"We have ten muskets, sir," was the answer; "besides some sabres, which belonged to the militia;

and luckily, the cartridges, which were intended for the soldiers I wrote for, came on Thursday."

"Why, sir," said Bonsor, "there's a little barrel of gunpowder in my cellar, which Mr. Jackson asked me to take care of for him for a few days, and that will stand us in some stead."

By this time the other policemen had arrived, and brought with them the necessary resources.

"You have your own yeomanry arms, Mr. Bonsor," said Villiers.

"Yes, sir."

"Bevan—you, I know, will not like to take a musket; but you can be of great use to me if you do not mind danger; you can be my aide-de-camp, and carry my messages."

And Bevan gladly consented to take a post which would employ him usefully, without compelling him to shed blood.

During the whole of this Villiers preserved the utmost cheerfulness. He laughed, joked, patted one man on the shoulder, showed another the proper way to knock out the loop-holes in the wall, came to Mrs. Bonsor's assistance as she was stumbling under a heavy mattress, which was to be placed against the hall-door; and, in particular, he won her heart by carrying with his own hands the great china bowl from the exposure of the bar into the cellar.

"We must have this filled with punch," he said, laughingly, to the good lady, "when we have sent these fellows back to their pits, and must all drink your good health in it. I do not know what garisons would do without ladies to help them."

And the comfortable landlady, pleased with the compliment from such a nice gentleman, continued to bustle about with redoubled activity.

"My poor girl, what is the matter with you?"

he asked Mary, the housemaid, who, having finished her task, was beginning to reflect on the approaching danger, with the tears coming into her eyes. "Why, you have never been in a siege before, as I have; it will be a feather in your cap as long as you live. See, you have not piled up these things properly; just help me to move that table—now toss up those cane chairs lightly one upon the other, so that if any one attempts to climb over them he may tumble head foremost into them. Remember, the next time you are besieged, that light things of that kind are far better to blockade a passage than heavy tables."

"Oh! sir, I hope I shall never be sieged again!" was the poor girl's reply. And she would have burst into an hysteric sobbing, but Villiers, without pretending to notice it, sent her off with his compliments to her mistress, to beg that she would provide immediately the best supper she possibly could in the bar. "I saw an excellent round of beef there," he said; "and you had better put hot water on the fire. And Mr. Bonsor, you will produce us, I hope, the very best bottles that you have in your cellar. We may want them," he said aside to Brown, "full as much as the little barrel of something else which it fortunately contains. Charles X. lost his throne by forgetting that his troops could not fight without eating; and I believe that the greatest man in this day, when a popular tumult is expected in London, always commences operations by victualling the billets of the soldiers. And now," he turned to Bevan, "will you go up to Bentley—I fear he must have been wakened by this noise—and break things to him as well as you can? One thing more, Mr. Brown, remains; we must blockade the lower windows and doors of the house toward the stables; and I think we can do this with the flies and the dung-

cart, and that old broken-down coach, which are in the yard. Let us turn them up, and leave only a passage for us to retire into the house, in case we are driven from our outposts." He looked at his watch. "We have no time, my men, to spare."

And, all setting their shoulders to the work, the barricade was soon completed.

"And now," said Villiers, as he went from room to room with the superintendent, examining the preparations, "I think we have done all that we could."

"And the rest?" said the superintendent.

"The rest," interrupted Villiers, "is in the hands of the Almighty; and to Him we must commit it. But we must give the men their supper; and, above all, take care that they do not become intoxicated."

"The women are the worst part of the thing," said Brown.

"I am not sure," replied Villiers. "Occupy them, make them take a part in what we have to do, prevent them from sitting down and working themselves into hysterics, and women may form a most valuable part of a garrison. I do not think, in the present state of England, that Englishwomen must be exempt from facing such perils as these."

"Very true, indeed, sir," replied the superintendent; and he added the reflection as an acquisition to his philosophical lucubrations, to be produced on the first opportunity. He would, indeed, have followed it up by some additional morality of his own, but Mary came to say that the supper was ready; and all the little garrison being summoned together, they sat down to a table garnished with all the delicacies of Mrs. Bonsor's larder, the richly inlaid round of beef occupying the centre, and the extremities groaning under a brown-powdered uncut ham and a cold pie, on which the recreant bagman

had only commenced an assault for his supper, promising, with a hearty relish, to resume his attack in the morning.

"I must quarrel with you, my good Mrs. Bonsor," said Villiers to his landlady, who, busy and cheered with the duties of her vocation, had almost forgotten why they were assembled. "But you do not treat us to any silver spoons. I hope you have not put away your plate, as if there was any chance of its falling into the enemy's hands. With such a gallant little army, and such a defender as Mr. Bonsor there, I hope it has never crossed your mind that they will ever penetrate into your bar."

And Mrs. Bonsor, looking with matronly pride at her husband, who had arrayed himself in his yeomanry dress and grasped his yeomanry sword, declared that she had no fear whatever — only she had indeed put the spoons into a drawer, from which she proceeded to restore them.

"I hope," said Villiers, "you have plenty of hot water. I have known a house gallantly defended with boiling kettles."

"Bless you, sir," said the landlady, "we are brewing this very night, and there's a supply of hot stuff enough for a regiment."

"Well, then," replied Villiers, "we must trust this to you, and Mary, and the boys. Have you taken up all your paving-stones, my lads?"

And the boys laughed, and promised to take a good aim from the upper windows.

Cold, reserved, haughty as Villiers was thought by those who only saw him in very general society, and proud as he certainly was by nature, in the present circumstances he threw it off entirely. He was animated, lively, not affable — for that implies condescension, but just sufficiently familiar with the whole party, down to the ostler himself, to

please, assure, encourage, and confirm them in their resolution to stand by him to the last, as the finest and nicest gentleman they ever saw. A common danger levels all distinctions but that of mind. He was moreover really pleased at the genuine manliness and courage with which they had promised to support him. He respected them, and was grateful to them, and even then occupied himself in planning how he should reward them if—— But with the “if” came also the thought of the frightful danger in which they were involved. And as the party was now beginning to be cheerful and merry, and almost to doubt if the whole was not a false alarm, he left Mr. Brown recounting stories of brave defences made by small bodies against large numbers, and, beckoning to Bevan, he went with him to Bentley’s room. He stopped on the staircase to ask one question.

“You have seen Bentley,” he said, “and prepared him.”

“Yes.”

“Had you any opportunity — did you allude — could you satisfy yourself on that dreadful point? Was there any truth in that man’s frightful tale, or is it a calumny?”

“A calumny — it is wholly false,” replied Bevan. “I spoke to him openly: he told me enough to satisfy my mind completely, though he is bound to say no more. I will answer for his innocence.”

“Thank Heaven!” repeated Villiers, fervently. “Now I can fight for him with comfort.”

He entered the room, and Bentley endeavoured to raise himself from his pillow, but fell back, and could only take his hand and press it to his lips. “You have saved my life,” he said, faintly, “thus far; and the Almighty will enable you now to save

it wholly, if it is his good pleasure. Would that I could help you ; but I am powerless.

"Not powerless," said Villiers. "Our time must be occupied with other things. But you can pray for us."

"Yes," said Bentley, faintly, "I have done so. I will do so. It is wonderful how calm and resigned I feel. I have no fear."

"Nor have I," said Bevan ; "but it will be a comfort to have prayed together." And with Villiers kneeling at his side, Bevan took his Prayer-book from his pocket.

"Read the Confession," whispered Villiers, "and the Absolution. This may be our last hour."

"Are you ill?" said Bevan to him, in alarm, as he came to the end of the Confession ; for Villiers was kneeling unsupported, but nearly drooping to the ground—his arms folded across his bosom—his face buried in his hands—his whole attitude that of a man sinking beneath an intolerable load.

"No, no, go on."

And as Bevan closed the Absolution, Villiers had once more raised himself. His voice joined calmly, almost joyfully, in the Lord's Prayer. His lips moved with every petition which Bevan read from the Psalms, as most suited to their fearful situation ; for Villiers never rose in the morning without committing a Psalm, or a portion of it, to heart as he was dressing.

"Read," he whispered to Bevan, "the Thanksgiving, for we have much as yet to be thankful for. Read the prayer for all conditions of men, for we must pray for those who are with us, who may be called, like ourselves, before our Maker, suddenly."

But there was no time to do more. A sound, hollow, deep, and swelling, like the muttering which precedes an earthquake, struck upon their ears. It

was the tramp of feet, measured, firm, numberless, as of a host. Bevan calmly gave them the blessing. and they both rose from their knees. Bentley stretched out his hand once more, and uttered a fervent prayer for them.

“They are coming,” he said; “God bless you. Go to your posts, and do not think of me, — only save yourselves.”

They were indeed coming. Villiers had scarcely time to return to the room where his little garrison was assembled, to address to them a few words reminding them of their duty to their sovereign, and encouraging them by the prospect of assistance, and still more by the rectitude of their cause, and the never-failing protection of Providence, when the assailants, in three regular columns, issued, without uttering a word, from the three streets which opened in front of the inn, and drew themselves up in a thick mass. As Villiers looked out from a bow window in which he had stationed himself, he had expected to see a mob — a promiscuous, irregular, undisciplined multitude, whom it would be easy to baffle and defeat by the exercise of a little prudence and firmness. But he was startled to see the order with which they marched, halted at the word of command, and drew themselves up almost in a military line. He was not aware how long the movement now made had been ripening under very expert instructors, and how much education had done to infuse discipline and order even into a seditious movement, by inculcating a due regard to an enlightened self-interest and intelligence. They had no sooner reached the ground than the silence which they had observed during their approach was broken by a tremendous shout, which fairly overthrew poor Mrs. Bonsor as she was removing her tea-spoons again to a place of se-

curity, and extorted a shriek from poor Mary, which went to Villiers's heart.

"My dear Bevan," he said, "go to those poor women, and comfort them. Make them do something. Tell them to get linen, to scrape lint, to boil water, to do any thing; only do not let them remain unoccupied. I can stand any mob, but I cannot stand a woman's shriek."

In the meanwhile, from the dark ferocious mass of heads now ranged in front of the inn, came forward a single person, who seemed to act as their leader. It was, in fact, Wheeler himself; and calling loudly for the landlord by name, he summoned him to give up to them the party whom he was harbouring in his house. Bonsor, with the honest indignation of an Englishman, would willingly have faced them, and bade them do their worst, but Villiers held him back.

"No, my good friend," he said; "I am the person who have brought you into this jeopardy, and it is fair that I should meet it."

Accordingly he threw up the sash, and, standing before them, unshrinkingly declared that he himself was one of the persons whom they were seeking, and warned them, in the sovereign's name, to withdraw. "Misguided as you are," he said, "you are come here to add crime to crime. You have endeavoured to secrete and confine a person who never injured you, and never intended to injure you; and because he has exercised the right of an Englishman to escape, you now come to violate the laws, and to risk the lives of yourselves and others. I warn you to retire in time. At present, whatever offences have been committed, neither your names nor your persons are known. That gentleman whom you have so unworthily treated knows nothing of your secrets, and has no intention of betraying them.

He has bound himself by a solemn promise not to do so; and in pursuance of that promise he has concealed, even from me, the circumstances which placed him in your hands. He is a man, as you ought to know, whose life is spent in providing for the wants of the poor in your own neighbourhood; and this is the return which he meets from Englishmen!"

"Tell them," said Brown, who was standing by his elbow, "that we are armed, and will shoot the first man who approaches."

"No, not yet," replied Villiers. "Do not speak of force till all other words have failed. It is the last thing of which a mob should be reminded."

And, in fact, the quietness, firmness, and coolness of his manner, the fluency and feeling with which he addressed them, and especially his declaration that their secrets were as yet undivulged, produced an obvious effect. A wavering and hesitation was observable among the mass of heads; and even Wheeler himself retired to consult with his lieutenants.

"And who are you?" exclaimed a voice from the crowd.

"I am Mr. Villiers," replied Villiers. "Your own neighbour, who hopes to spend many years in your neighbourhood, and to do you all the good in my power; but who am shocked and astonished, on my return to England, to find that Englishmen can so far forget themselves as to be guilty of such outrages as these. But it is a satisfaction to remain ignorant of the real authors of them. And such a scene as this I trust never to witness again."

He proceeded in the same kind but firm manner to address them at much greater length. It was one of his first objects to gain time; and he knew how easily an English, or indeed any mob, are led

and influenced by a good speaker. Nor was he disappointed. They listened to him with less and less unwillingness. "He's a bold chap,"—"Isn't he a fine speaker?"—"Well, I will say, he's a man of mettle,"—"I don't think he's so bad after all," were remarks which he caught at intervals; and it is not impossible but that his eloquence might have been successful, had not a figure, who had hitherto kept entirely in the back-ground, hidden under the houses, now crept up, and mixed with the outlying stragglers, who were unable to hear what was said.

"Hoot him," said the figure to a boy. "Hiss him. Why don't you hoot and hiss?"

"Hoot him," yelled out the boy. "Hoot him, hoot him," joined his neighbours. And the clamour once commenced, in a few moments the contagion seized the whole body, and a din and roar arose which drowned all that Villiers would have uttered. He saw that the ground was cut from under his feet. He made signs, but in vain, though he continued to stand firm and unmoved, waiting for an opportunity of obtaining another hearing. Even a mob cannot hoot for ever; and though the favourable feeling was extinguished for the time by the physical excitement which had been raised against him, he might once more have gained an audience, but the same figure in the back-ground, who had looked at his watch, and seemed impatient of delay, once more crept into the crowd.

"Why do you not have a fling at him?" he said to the same boy whom he had addressed before. "Here's a stone."

And Villiers the next instant heard the pane of glass above his head shiver into atoms. It was like the single big drop which brings down the whole torrent of the thunder-storm. No sooner was the sound heard than there rose from the dense mass of

heads a yell twice as fearful as before. "Down with him! down with him!" was the cry; and a volley of stones followed which shattered every window in the front of the house. Villiers saw that all was over. He had been struck on the head with a flint, and his face was bleeding.

"Shall we fire?" asked one of the men, impatiently.

"No, no," said Villiers, "remember my orders. Let us wait for some more deadly manifestation before we take life. Are all your men at their post, Mr. Brown?"

"Yes, sir."

"Wait, then, till I have spoken to the mob once more."

And, taking advantage of a momentary lull, Villiers admonished them again, in the sovereign's name, to withdraw. "I warn you now," he said, "that we are well armed—thoroughly prepared to shoot the first man that proposes to enter the house; and I call Heaven to witness, that if you still persist in this outrage your blood is on your own head."

Before he could finish the sentence, a pistol was fired from the crowd—no one ever knew by whom, and a ball whizzed past Villiers, and grazed his ear.

"Now, then," he said to Brown, "all of you to your posts!" He drew his head within the window, closed down the sash, and begged Bevan to put up the mattresses against it again, so as to leave a space from which, with his own pistols, he could command the entrance. It was the only window in the house where this was possible. "Now go to the side walls. Charge the men to keep their fire, as I have ordered, and on no account to fire promiscuously, where they may hurt women or chil-

dren. Ask Mrs. Bonsor to come to me: it will initiate her in her duties to put a little lint on this hurt, which is a mere trifle." It was done chiefly to relieve her mind by giving her some occupation; and the poor woman was roused from the stupor of terror into which she had fallen, and began to bustle about, with Mary, for lint and rags, pleased with the thought of being useful, and relieved from much of her apprehension for the future by finding that the first wound was of so little moment. Meanwhile, the firing of the pistol was the signal for the first attack. Twelve huge savage foundrymen, each wielding an enormous crowbar, with which they break open their furnaces, detached themselves from the front of the mob, and advanced to the door. Two blows were levelled on it, but failed to demolish it; but as the third man was poising his bar, and levelling it against the lock, eight tongues of flame leaped out of the side walls, amidst a volume of smoke and the discharge of musketry. The smoke cleared off. Six of the ringleaders were lying dead upon the ground; two others had been wounded; and, amidst a yell, partly of terror and surprise, and partly of fury, the whole mass of assailants had recoiled, and left the space in front of the inn quite clear.

CHAPTER IX.

“ I WILL make one more effort,” said Villiers, gazing from the window on the sad sight beneath him. “ They have obeyed me well—have singled out the ringleaders, and marked them. It may be, Heaven will still touch their hearts, and we may be spared more of this frightful bloodshed.” He threw up the window again, and endeavoured to make himself heard. But the moment he appeared, the uproar became terrific: several shots were fired at him, amidst a volley of stones; and Bevan dragged him back into the room.

“ It is hopeless,” he said. “ When blood has once been shed, a mob becomes a monster of ferocity. The battle must be fought out. Bear me witness that I have done all in my power to spare life.”

He had no time, however, to say more. The assailants had consulted together, and, gathering themselves in a dense column, they rushed, with a hideous cry, up to the front of the house. Once more the fire from the flanking walls opened upon them, and every shot told: Villiers himself, from his post at the window, fixed upon the most conspicuous of the assailants, and his aim rarely missed. From the attics the boys hurled down their paving-stones upon a mass of heads on which every missile did execution. The women themselves, kindled with the excitement, now joined in the defence; and, arming themselves with kettles of boiling water, and pails of scalding liquor from the brew-house, poured them upon the eyes and faces of the

pitmen, till they shrieked with agony. Body after body fell, and was trampled on by the advancing column, who, untouched as yet by the fire of the musketry, were not aware of the danger of approaching till they were close to the house, and there, excluded from retreat, aimed their ineffectual blows at the doors and windows, and then sank, and were trodden down in a mass of carnage. Pressed and jammed together, they were unable to use their arms, or receive orders. In vain Wheeler and others in command endeavoured to make the advancing body recede, that there might be scope for a more regular attack. Every thing was confusion and uproar; howlings of the wounded and dying; shriekings and horrible imprecations, as the torrents of boiling stuff were poured suddenly on their upturned faces; blasphemous outcries, which none but demons would have uttered; and, rising above all, threats of the most horrible vengeance against Villiers and all around him. At last their efforts succeeded. The panels of the door were smashed to atoms; the windows—the shutters—framework,—all were demolished. A breach, it seemed, was made into the house; but, to the disappointment of the attackers, both the passage and the rooms had been so filled with mattresses, drawers, and chests, and light chairs, piled up to the ceiling, over which it was impossible to climb, that they were as far removed from their object as at first. Wheeler himself, furious when he found himself thus baffled, at last succeeded in forcing his men back from an unavailing attempt, in which life after life was sacrificed without their being able to touch the defenders of the little fortress. Once more the mass recoiled; the space before the house was cleared; and as Villiers looked down upon it again, now piled with corpses and heaps of mutilated and

wounded bodies groaning with pain, the clock struck four. Two hours were past of the four on which he had calculated to hold out. There was a pause—a silence as awful as the dead, breathless calm between the bursts of a hurricane. And Villiers sank into a chair, and burst into a flood of tears.

Bevan stood by him, with mingled compassion and admiration, but left the feeling to find vent, without attempting to check it.

“Leave me,” said Villiers, “for two minutes to myself. Go, if you are not worn out, and see that the men have refreshments. Send Mr. Brown and Bonsor to me; and let me know if any one has been hurt.”

Bevan hastened on his commission, and Villiers fastened the door, and knelt down to calm and recover himself, and ask for guidance. He knew that the worst was still to come. The more sanguine landlord thought otherwise. He came, in high spirits, to congratulate and thank Villiers, as if all was achieved. But his courage was considerably damped by hearing the opinion of the superintendent, that another attack would take place. “If,” said he, “they had been a mere common mob, without object or order, they would have given it up long since. But there is more mischief in them than I thought.”

“Do you remember,” said Bevan to Villiers, “the young lion we spoke of? Bear or tiger would be the more proper name. But this is the monster that England has been nurturing with her manufacturing system, and instructing in her alphabet; and even now it is not full grown.”

At this moment the keeper came in. He also thought the battle was won. “Blacker,” he said, “had come to him, and asked to change posts with him, as he did not like, if he could help it, to fire upon his old friends. And he was accordingly

stationed in the loft, to watch the garden gate. Was it necessary for him to remain there longer?"

"Absolutely necessary," said Villiers. "You will observe the enemy have not retreated; they have screened themselves behind the houses, but they are still in full force; and if they have with them men who know any thing of their business, their next attempt will be upon the stable-yard, since they cannot get into the house in the front. Do you think it possible, Mr. Brown, for us to hold good the side walls, if they attempt to scale them?"

Brown thought for a minute, and shook his head. "We must try," he said; "but, with their number, I doubt."

"No one has been hurt yet?" asked Villiers.

"None."

"Have the men had their refreshment?"

"Yes."

"How are the poor women?"

Bevan said that he had taken them for the present into Bentley's room, and comforted them; and that Bentley himself was now speaking to them; but that they were in a sad state. Villiers then gave his orders, and having placed Bonsor to occupy his post at the bow-window, he prepared to place himself at the head of the little garrison in the yard. It was now the post of danger. He had been perfectly right in his conjecture. Grady, a savage-looking Irishman, who had been a private in the life-guards, and flogged out of the regiment for repeated drunkenness, was at the head of one of the columns, and he now insisted on directing the attack upon the side walls. "Silence those muskets," he said, "and the day is ours."

Wheeler himself saw the wisdom of the advice; and, though their numbers were thinned, and not a few had stolen away in despair, it was resolved to

adopt it. Villiers was looking from the window on the heap of mangled bodies, among which two haggard miserable women, who had forced their way through the assailants, were now searching, with piercing cries, for a son and a husband whom they missed. He thought of making an effort to persuade the pitmen, at least, to remove their wounded, under a promise that they should not be fired on during the removal. But Brown interfered.

"These men," he said, "know nothing of such things. They have no trust, and no faith, and no pity; and you must leave them to themselves. Hark, sir, hark! There's no time to be lost. Do you not hear a tramp? They're coming. Hark!"

And listening, they caught distinctly the sound of a large body of men approaching.

"It's the soldiers," cried the sanguine Bonsor; "you can hear their tread."

"The soldiers," repeated Bevan, "the soldiers!" and he was hastening off, with the joyful tidings, to Bentley's room.

"Stop," cried Villiers, catching his arm. "You are not sure. Listen to that shout? Those are not cheers of defiance."

It was too true. The same dark figure which had so frequently before stolen into the outskirts of the crowd, and directed their movements unperceived, when he saw the determined resistance of the little garrison, had hastened to a hut which stood on the top of an eminence over the town. From this four rockets shot up, which were answered from Pen-deen hill, about three miles distant, on the side of which lay the great Brocas works; and the hurrah of the assailants now hailed the arrival of a strong reinforcement from that quarter. Only a few moments of suspense were

given; but even those moments were as hours. Villiers alone remained calm.

"Are you all ready?" he said. "Remember, if we cannot make good the line of wall, we retire into the house, without risk."

"Make haste," cried Brown, "they're coming."

And as they hurried down the stairs, the whole mass of assailants rushed, with horrible yells, into the little square. Instead of attempting the house, they divided themselves, as Villiers had suspected, into two bodies; and, provided with such means as they had been able to seize, they threw themselves on each other's shoulders, and proceeded to scale both the walls at once. Wave followed on wave. The openings made in the mass by the fire from the loop-holes were filled up, as if none had fallen. Heads, shoulders, whole bodies appeared on the summit of the wall along the whole line,—some hanging lifeless across it, as they fell under the bayonets of the besieged; others thrust forward by the advancing mass, and thrown headlong into the court; others dropping down in the intervals between the line of defenders. The struggle was fearful. But Villiers saw that it was hopeless; and while it was yet possible to give the signal for retreat, they mustered at the back door of the inn, and halted. One man only was missing: it was Blacker. "He's in the loft," said Villiers, "and will be cut off;" and plunging across the yard, he dragged him down, and had all but brought him to the steps of the door, when a fresh body of men burst through the garden gate. They fell on him with fury. "Save me!" cried the miserable man, "save me!" as Wheeler, one of the foremost, seized and tore him from Villiers's grasp. Villiers threw himself upon the body, and with his sabre swept a circle around him, and, placing the unhappy wretch behind him,

he endeavoured to cover his retreat into the house. But it was in vain. The walls were scaled, the yard filled with ruffians, and, after a tremendous effort, Villiers found himself driven up to the steps, and was dragged by Bonsor and the keeper within the door. "Open the door," he cried to them, as they endeavoured to retain him in their arms, and to prevent him from exposing himself in vain. "Open the door. They will tear that poor wretch in pieces. Let us rescue him." But the firmness of the keeper held him fast. It was too late. Amidst the roar and outcry they heard one frightful cry, "Save me!" From the window one of the policemen saw a figure hurled down to the ground by a group of fiend-like faces, who fell on it like cannibals on their prey. And this was the last thing known of the unhappy man. When the day dawned, and the field of slaughter was examined, a limb was found, with a fragment of dress upon it, which was supposed to be his, but all the rest was indistinguishable. Villiers, absolutely sick with horror, would have sunk under it, had his attention not been called to Bevan, who, with nerves far less accustomed to such scenes, had fallen back in a chair and all but fainted. But this sight, and the necessity of exerting himself, roused Villiers anew.

"Now, my friends," he said, "we are safe. We have gained all the time we could have expected by maintaining our outposts. They cannot touch us here; and we have only to stand firm for an hour or two longer, by which time the dragoons will arrive."

"Thank God!" uttered every one present, with a deep and long inspiration.

"Why, Bevan, my good fellow, you of all men must not give way," said Villiers to him. "What shall I do without my aid-de-camp? Take some of

this," and he compelled him to swallow a glass of wine. "Now, gentlemen, half to the front of the house, and half to the back. Manage your fire well. Let the boys, with their paving-stones, employ themselves in the attics; and Bonsor, here — if Mrs. Bonsor has any large washing-tubs, and will fill them with water, and put some wet blankets into them, they may be of use."

He did not tell the landlord his reason; but he whispered to Brown, "We have little to fear now but one thing. Look to fire, and be ready to put it out: but say nothing. Move that mattress closer to the back-door—now bring that chest of drawers against it—raise it on the table; those chairs will fill up the passage. Are all the other lower windows well barricaded?" and Brown having examined them with him, they were satisfied that it would be impossible for an entrance to be effected without more time than must elapse before assistance would reach them. He pointed this out to the little party, and their stations being taken at the upper windows, the battle once more began.

It is needless to dwell upon the madness and ferocity with which the assailants now, like a tiger blooded with its first prey, hurled themselves against each front of the house. The doors and the windows on both sides were in a few minutes shattered to atoms and torn from their place. The ground in front of them was piled with bodies, which fell rapidly under the fire from the upper windows, and still fresh waves swept up and broke against the wall, in vain attempts to tear away the mattresses and beds, which presented a more effectual barrier than even a wall of stone. Four times Wheeler, who was leading on the attack in the yard, drew back his men and paused. Four times they fell again upon the house, hoping that

the ammunition of the little garrison would be exhausted or their courage worn out. Their own fire-arms, not many in number, had long since become useless by the failure of powder, and the stoutest hearts were beginning to think of abandoning the attempt, or, at any rate, of waiting for daylight, and for what the day might bring. They now felt that the plot which they had so long dwelt on in secret had exploded, and this was the first act. They were now committed; but if this was the beginning, what would be the end? Wheeler alone was resolved to lose no time. He had kept to himself the secret of the arrival of dragoons at Hakewell Barracks, lest it should dishearten his followers; but finding the steady and military defence which the attacked were making, he could little doubt that they had thought of sending for assistance. At any rate, news of such an outbreak travels fast, and with the morning the troops would come. He rested gloomily and savagely, like a wild beast at bay, with his back against the stable wall. Something embarrassed his feet and he looked out to see what it was. It was a mangled, disfigured head, and he kicked it away with a frightful oath — “So much for one traitor.” One of the men brought him a pot of beer to quench his thirst, but he thrust it aside, and cursed him for his pains. He was like a dog caught in a trap, and frantic with pain, whom it is not safe to approach even to set him free. The men rested on their arms, and stood aloof from him; when the same dark figure which was noticed before, once more crept forward from the gloom, and stood at his elbow.

“Captain,” he said.

And Wheeler jumped round furiously at the interruption to his thoughts. “Who are you? Ha!”

and he broke into a savage laugh, in which scorn was mingled with passion. "You, Mr. Pearce? Who would have thought of seeing you where fighting is going forward? Are you sure" — and he lowered his voice and ground his teeth — "are you sure this is none of your work?"

"Wheeler," said Pearce, calmly, "are you not mad to ask such a question, when you know what I have done for you this day? Whose fault is this but your own? Who permitted your fellows to bring the parson up here into the forest?"

Some recriminations only exasperate, but this charged Wheeler with a fault which he was ready to avow and lament, and it rather conciliated him.

"Who was it," continued Pearce, "that managed to bring you the Brocas men just in time, but myself? And who can now, if he chooses, put you in five minutes into the middle of that house, but myself?"

Wheeler stared at him as if asking explanation.

"I tell you, Wheeler," said Pearce, "that I can put you, and as many men as you choose, into the middle of that house in ten minutes, — that is, if I choose."

Wheeler stared again; but he was so well acquainted with Pearce's wonderful skill in observing and collecting information, and carrying on intrigues, that he believed it possible for him now to possess some secret means of executing what he proposed.

"And you will choose," he said, hastily, "you will choose. How is it? Which is the way?" and he snatched up the heavy iron bar which he had been wielding, and was moving to the house.

"Stop, man, stop," rejoined Pearce; "I may choose, and I will choose, but it must be on one condition."

"And what is that?" asked Wheeler, impetuously.

"I will tell it you fairly, Wheeler," said the other. "You know that you have in your possession papers of mine which you have no right to keep, and which can be of no use to you, though they are to me. Give them up to me, and I pledge myself to put you in the middle of that house within one quarter of an hour, nay, in five minutes."

Wheeler uttered a violent imprecation. "They are lost," he cried.

"No, Wheeler," answered Pearce; "they are not lost—you know they are not lost; you are not such a fool. Give me up those papers, and I will do what I promise."

"You shall do it without," said Wheeler. "Look here;" and he kicked with his foot against the ghastly head which lay before him, and even Pearce turned sick and shuddered. "This is the way we deal with traitors; and if you refuse to show us the way into that house now, why you are a traitor, and shall be dealt with accordingly."

"Hollo, there!" and he summoned some of his men to seize Pearce. Pearce himself preserved his equanimity as usual. "Send away your men," he said, "for you know they are of no use. You know that if my head was to be torn from my body, I would not utter a word which I did not choose; and if I were gone, what would become of your purse, ha? Stand off, my good fellows," he said to the party that approached; "do you know who I am?" and they fell back, awed by his manner and gesture.

"Wheeler," he said again, "you have now but a short time to finish your work in: in another hour or two soldiers will be here; and unless the house and all that's in it are yours by that time, you know that you are lost. No one will stand by you to be

shot down like partridges. If you cannot take a poor public-house, who do you think will follow you in any other of your projects? Will you give me those papers?"

"They are lost, I tell you."

"No," replied Pearce, "they are not lost. I give you five minutes for your answer, and then I shall be off." And he took out his watch, and began to count. Wheeler remained sulkily silent. The five minutes expired; and Pearce wished him good night, and was leaving.

"Stop, come back," cried Wheeler; "if I can find them, you shall have them to-morrow."

Pearce came up to him, and looked him full in the face. "Do you think I am such a fool as to wait for to-morrow? I must have them now on this spot."

"They are not here," said Wheeler; "they are in my box."

"No," said Pearce, hastily, "they are not in your box." He spoke incautiously; and if the other had observed the vehemence and certainty with which he asserted this, he might have suspected what was actually the fact, — that Pearce, while every one else had been engaged in the affray, had contrived to return to Wheeler's room, and there, by means of his ingenious apparatus, had made himself master of all the contents of the corded deal box, among which he had not hesitated to select some documents of even more importance to their right owner than his own were to himself. He reconciled the abstraction to his conscience by the plea of necessary retaliation. The end justified the means.

Wheeler remained silent again. "And if I do give them to you," he said, at last, "how do I know that you will show us the way?"

"I will give you leave to shoot me," said Pearce.

"We may do that without your leave," said Wheeler.

"I can wait no longer," exclaimed the other. "Am I to have the papers?"

"Take them, and much good may they do you," cried Wheeler, furiously. And from a secret pocket in his rough coat he drew a packet tied with tape, and sealed with black wax, and flung it at Pearce's feet. Pearce took it up, carefully examined it, carefully deposited it in a secret pocket in his own coat, and then told Wheeler and his party to follow him.

CHAPTER X.

THERE was near to, but not actually adjoining, the north gable end of the Blake Arms, a long low range of buildings, which had been attached by degrees to the main fabric, and served the purpose of scullery, brew-house, wash-house, and other useful offices. Seemingly, there was an open passage between it and the house; and, externally, it presented no means of access to the interior. It had, therefore, not been marked as a point of attack; and as no window opened from the gable, it lay out of sight of the besieged. Pearce led the way to this range, and ordered them to remove a pile of old packing-boxes and hampers, which were lying loosely in one corner. "Underneath," he said, "you will find a trap-door; that door is the outer entrance to the cellars, which lie under these low buildings; from the cellars a flight of stone steps leads up into the kitchen. And I will venture to say, that no one has thought of blocking up that passage. It is scarcely ever used."

In what manner he had obtained his information it is unnecessary to explain. With his shrewdness and talent for such a discovery, this was one of the least extraordinary of his achievements. He had learned it from the men who were in the habit of carting coals into the Blake Arms, and who had often seen butts rolled down into the cellar through the inclined plane which the trap-door covered, and had themselves been admitted by the stone steps into the interior of the house.

And while this was passing on the outside, what was occurring in the interior of the house? Few things are more wonderful than the facility with which the human mind accommodates itself to any circumstances, however strange and dreadful. Satisfied that the defences were sufficient to enable them to hold out for a considerable time longer—accustomed to the fearful sights, and sounds, and work of butchery which at first had thrilled them with horror, and encouraged by the pause which had been made in the attack, and by the obvious discomfiture of the assailants, the little party had laid down their arms, and Villiers had insisted that such as were most exhausted should endeavour to take some repose, if only for a few minutes. Mrs. Bonsor and Mary were employed in carrying refreshments to them, and Villiers, with Mr. Brown, once more looked round the lower rooms, strengthening the weak parts of the barricades, and satisfying themselves that all was right. Two points he was still anxious about—the possibility of fire and the failure of ammunition. Against the former he had made the provision of the wet blankets, and for the latter he now proposed that recourse should be had to the powder, of which the landlord had spoken, in the cellar. Brown went to call Bonsor, that he might show him where it was to be found. And all three had just reached the door, which opened from the kitchen at the top of the stone steps, when they heard voices, a rush, a shout on the other side within the cellar, and, before they could recover themselves, a crash followed, the panels of the door fell in, and they found themselves confronting ten of the most savage of the gang, armed with pickaxes, crowbars, hatchets, and pikes, and their clothes and faces smeared with filth and blood. Wheeler was at their head. Each party recoiled for a moment

at the unlooked-for encounter. But it was only for a moment ; the next instant a furious conflict commenced. The steps were narrow, steep, and without any protection at the sides, and the communication between them and the vaults beyond was through a dark narrow archway, which admitted only two persons abreast. But for this, all must have been over at once. It gave time to Villiers and his companions to stop their progress, until the rest of the little garrison could come to their assistance. Two of the assailants were hurled off the steps by a tremendous blow from the keeper. Wheeler had aimed his pike at the breast of Villiers, but the thrust was parried by the bayonet of a policeman. Brown himself nearly severed the arm of another pitman from the shoulder by a stroke of his sabre ; and the shots of the rest of the party, aimed into the dark passage, cleared it for the time. There was a moment's respite. "Block up this archway," said Villiers. "Here are tubs, boxes ; roll that hogshead to the entrance, and we are still safe." But before their purpose could be effected, the whole range of cellars behind was filled with armed men. They rushed forward like demons, some of them bearing torches, which threw a lurid glare on the horrible faces of the throng, others staving the casks and gorging themselves with their contents, — all thrusting and forcing on each other in an irresistible torrent. The foremost, who had retired within the narrow archway, were driven on by the rear, whether they would advance or not. Three of them were struck down. Four more fell under the fire of the besieged party, who had stationed themselves on the stone steps. But the crush carried every thing before it. Villiers was driven back, and thrown down just on the other side of the archway. One of the policemen was grasped, and hurled from the

steps ; the others were compelled to give way ; and Bonsor, exclaiming that "all was lost!" was hastening to make his last effort, and die in defending his wife, when, amidst the din and clamour of the conflict, all at once, without a moment's warning, the whole body, besieged and besiegers, were wrapt in a whirlwind of fire ; there was a deep, rushing, quivering shock, like an earthquake. A burst, as of thunder, a crash, gusts and volumes of smoke, chimneys tottering, roofs splitting, walls opening and closing again in huge rents from top to bottom, the ground rocking under their feet ; then came a pause ; and then over their heads the showering down of beams and stones, and fragments of roofs and mangled limbs. All was silent ; and the clock struck five.

When Villiers opened his eyes, he looked up and saw the grey sky just paling with the approach of dawn, and visible through a yawning chasm which had been broken in the crown of the vault. A large stone was hanging over his head, and seemed ready to fall and crush him. And stunned and bewildered as he was, he endeavoured to move himself, but a heavy weight was lying across him. It was a body apparently lifeless, his face to the ground ; and, by his rough pea-jacket, it was evidently one of the assailants. Villiers drew himself from beneath him, and raised himself to look around. The vault was shattered ; black volumes of smoke were curling round and round within it, and issuing from the now shapeless aperture which had formed the narrow entrance into the cellar. The stone steps were covered with a pile of mangled, and scorched, and blackened bodies, among which he recognised Brown, stretched upon the ground, but still breathing, and the landlord apparently dead, and half-buried under a mass of rubbish. His thoughts

wandered, like those of a dreaming man, to the scenes in which he had been engaged during the night; and at times he fancied that it was a dream, and that he would awake and find it so. But the cold air blew upon his face, and he recovered the consciousness of its reality. He made an effort to move from the spot; his hands were unhurt. A pike had penetrated through the fleshy part of his left arm, but without any serious mischief; and having been thrown behind the wall through which the archway opened, he had been secured both from the blast and the crash of the explosion. For he now remembered the barrel of powder, and was satisfied that the assailants in their fury, having begun to stave the casks, had fallen also upon this; and the torches, which had glared within the cellar, was sufficient to explain the rest. His next thought was Bentley. He made his way into the kitchen, which had been dismantled as by an earthquake. The plaster had fallen from the ceiling; the shelves had dislodged their contents; tables and chairs had been overturned; the fire had been blown from the hearth, and blazing coal still lay about the floor; and a broad rent in the side wall admitted the light through it. From this he passed into the bar, which presented a similar scene of devastation. Part of the staircase had been blown away, and he was obliged to climb up by the remaining fragments. But on reaching Bentley's room he found Bevan, with the two women and the boys, there, and in safety. They were upon their knees, too horror-struck either to speak or move. Bentley himself, who, naturally weak and nerveless, had acquired strength and fortitude by the trial to which he had been exposed, was the most composed. Bevan, whose heroism, however, had hitherto been nursed in theory, without opportunity of testing it by

practice, was completely overcome. But the sight of Villiers, alive and unhurt, restored them partially to their presence of mind. Poor Mrs. Bonsor's first demand was for her husband. She flung herself at Villiers's knees, implored him to take her to him, bewailed the day that she was born, and the hour that Villiers had entered the house ; and then checking herself, even in the midst of her agony, lest she should hurt his feelings, she rose up, and snatching the candle, was hastening down stairs. She had nearly fallen down the aperture which had been caused by the explosion, but a hand at the bottom was stretched out to save her, and she was caught in the arms of her husband, half-scorched, and blackened, and yet pale as a ghost, and still bewildered in his senses, but alive. Scarcely before had Villiers seen a sight which so relieved him. They hastened to the stone steps, and from a mass of bodies extricated Brown, who, like Villiers, had been thrown down and trampled on by the rush, but had been also protected by them in their fall. One of the policemen was also alive, and had raised himself from the ground at their approach, and was shaking his limbs to discover if they were still sound. The others they were searching for, when a noise was heard at the front of the house ; and Villiers, reminding Brown that the conflict might not yet be over, and that advantage might be taken of the confusion, to effect an entrance, went to ascertain the state of the case. He found the yard entirely deserted, but strewn with the blackened fragments of the outbuildings, and with scorched and mangled bodies. The court in front was also clear. The assailants had fled at the explosion in all directions. Only a few straggling faces were peering round the corners of the adjoining buildings ; and he began to cherish the hope that the day was

his own. One more hour, and it was scarcely possible but that the military would arrive. He sat down at the bow-window to watch ; and the stupor and exhaustion which follows over-excitement surprised him with a dizziness, in which he nearly fell from his chair. Once more the whole scene appeared a dream. The room seemed to reel round him. Horrible phantoms, visions of the realities which he had witnessed, thronged round him, as in mockery and defiance. He roused himself, drew his hand across his eyes, and once more prepared to take his post, in case the attack should be renewed. He summoned Brown, now sufficiently recovered to examine the state of the defences.

"It cannot be," said Bevan, when Villiers suggested the possibility that they might still be in danger. "It is not possible, after what has happened, that they will venture again."

Villiers cheered him with the expression of a hope that he was right.

"But it is our business," he said, "to prepare for the worst. All may still be lost by neglect. And if these are the dangers and the enemies which we are likely to encounter in this country, we must learn perseverance as well as courage. Here is Mr. Brown, with the true spirit of an English soldier, as ready to fight to the last, now, as he was at the beginning."

Brown cheerfully assented. On examination, they found that the house itself, though shattered by the explosion, had not sustained any damage which materially affected its security. The archway opening which had been made into the kitchen was soon blocked up. And the little garrison, miserably reduced in number, and thinking bitterly of those who had been lost, once more assembled, and

Villiers insisted that they should take some refreshment again. The morning was now breaking with returning light; the consciousness and the reality of danger were disappearing. And assuming a confidence which he did not feel, Villiers cheered and comforted them, till they began to think that all danger was past.

And all danger would have been past, if the conflict had been only with a rude and undisciplined mob. But other elements were arrayed against them. And any one who in the present day should think that an outbreak of the kind is to be met as a common explosion of popular violence, will be deceived, as they were deceived.

CHAPTER XI.

THE body which had recoiled from the front when the explosion took place, and those who had escaped from the yard, reassembled at some little distance, in an open space, which served for the market of Howlas. Dismayed, disheartened, and ignorant of the cause of the explosion, their leaders lost, and their passion cooled by terror, they would have abandoned all further attempts upon the inn, and separated, had not once more the same figure, which has appeared so frequently, emerged from the surrounding gloom, and insinuated himself into the crowd. In the mass not a few were found who had been saved, almost miraculously, from the explosion. They had been drinking in the cellars, and many of them, though fearfully burnt, were still in a state of intoxication. There was no difficulty in approaching, none in representing all that had passed as a mere delusion, none in suggesting the possibility of obtaining more drink. The Swan was at hand; there was plenty of liquor there. Nothing was needed but to call for the landlord; and a rush, no one seemed to know how or why, was made to the Swan. The family, already startled from their sleep, and gazing in terror from the windows, were compelled to open the door. The mob (for they had now lost all appearance of an armed force) burst into the passage, the bar, the cellar, demanding liquor. In a few minutes the house was ransacked. Those who were before intoxicated became now frantic, and those who had been

desirous in sober terror to retire were now again inflamed and ready for a fresh attack. They were ready for any thing, — reckless and maddened with drink. Candles were burning in the house; and one, the same boy who has appeared before, held one in joke to the curtains of the front parlour. The jest caught, others did the same, and before any attempts could be made to extinguish the flames, the house was in a blaze. “Now, then, to the inn!” was the cry. “To the inn!” “To the inn!” Some one had raised the shout from the extremity of the throng. But it was caught up in a moment. “To the inn!” “To the inn!” And Villiers, who had heard the uproar, and saw a glare of light rising up over the roofs of the adjoining houses, had scarcely time to give the alarm, and to gather his diminished garrison, when once more the assailants plunged headlong into the little square. They were no longer marshalled; there was no word of command, no halt, no appearance of order. Leaping, dancing, shrieking, howling, more of them bearing in their hands fragments of burning wood than weapons, and resembling little but a horde of wild savages in some mad and bloody revel — tossing their torches into the air, and hurling imprecations upon all who should resist them, mixed with obscene shouts and blasphemous curses, they rushed upon the inn. One party advanced before the rest. In the midst of them was a wretched man, naked all but his shirt, whom they had dragged from his bed, at the Swan, and at his earnest prayers had permitted him, as a jest, to drag with him a heavy portmanteau. Round him they danced and screamed, till the miserable being would fain have closed his eyes and ears to avert the sight and sounds, which seemed to him a foretaste of his place of eternal torment. Now they dragged him along through the mire; then

they hunted him before them ; then they compelled him to hug and embrace his precious portmanteau, which, at last, they tore from him, burst it open, and in one minute its contents were dispersed among the mob, and sovereigns were rolling about the ground. At last, as if satiated with play, a hand was raised behind him, and he was levelled to the ground. "Ha!" said Brown to Villiers, who were gazing on the scene from the bow-window, "there is our unfortunate friend ; he has neither saved his money, nor has his money saved him. But, shall we fire?"

"Not yet," said Villiers, "the miserable wretches are intoxicated. Blood enough has been shed already, if more can be spared: they may be incapable of doing mischief, and must be insensible to menace." And, apparently, this was the case. They advanced close up to the inn, dashed their weapons against the wall, but made no effort to enter.

"Are there not some boys climbing over the wall?" said Brown. "Look, sir, close by the wall that has been broken down by the explosion."

"Yes," said Villiers, "there is a man helping a boy over; look, he is giving him a torch. Let Bonsor have an eye to the yard. I confess I like these fiery weapons far less than the pickaxes and pikes. Happily, they do not seem to have any of their wits about them." And the mob indeed had not; but there was another near them who had — the same who was assisting over the wall the young boy, to whom he had suggested the exploit.

"Surely," said Villiers, a short time after, "I smell fire. There is smoke coming up the staircase. They cannot have found means to throw fire into the house?" But he had scarcely uttered the words, when Bonsor rushed up stairs to tell him that the lower rooms were in flames.

"All of them?" asked Villiers.

"Three," said Brown. "They have managed to throw fire in among the bedding and chairs, and the things are too crowded for us to get at it."

It was the first moment that Villiers had felt despair. But he now sank down, and groaned aloud. Presently he sprang up, as if ashamed of his weakness.

"Can we make a sally?" he said to Brown.

Brown shook his head. "There are but five of us, and there are two women and the sick gentleman to protect, and he not able to walk. It would be certain destruction."

And at that minute the clock struck once more.

"Three hours!" exclaimed Villiers. "If we could only gain a little time—half an hour more!"

But the smoke now rolled up the stairs in thicker volumes.

"Where are the wet blankets!" cried Villiers. But on examining, it was found impossible to use them. The fire had been thrown in among the loose furniture, and it was hopeless to attempt to extinguish it.

"Bonsor," said Villiers, "close fast the doors of these rooms. Help me to tear away this part of the staircase. Now throw down into the opening carpets, rugs—any thing which will close it up. You have a cistern on that floor; get at the pipe, and have water ready to keep them wet with. If we can stop the communication between the two floors, we may last out yet."

"Why, sir," said Bonsor, "I have often heard my father say that this house was built by a man who had a patent for keeping houses from being burnt. It was he who built that house in which the king and all his court drank tea in the upper room, while the under room was set on a blaze with

faggots and tar-barrels. He had something — mortar, I think — put between all the joists of the ceilings, so that the fire cannot get at the wood.”

“Thank —” exclaimed Villiers. He was going to finish the exclamation, but even in his deepest emotion he hesitated to use the sacred name. He only looked up reverently, fervently, and gratefully. “This may help us.”

And they proceeded with greater energy to accomplish what he had suggested. The staircase was pulled away, the aperture filled up. Nothing remained for them but to sit down and gaze upon each other, while the devouring element beneath them was roaring and chafing under their feet as if impatient to obtain access to them.

“It’s very odd, sir,” said Bonsor, who had just succeeded in turning the pipe of the cistern, so as to give them a command of water, “but my father, who was your father’s tenant, sir, at Rudgely Farm, when he built this house, always had a fancy that it would be burnt some day or other. It’s wonderful how things turn out. Who would have thought, when he had that mortar put to the ceilings, and this great leaden cistern built, so many years back, that it would have stood us in this stead now? It looks wonderfully like a Providence.”

And Villiers thought how many such Providences occur each hour, connecting the most remote occurrences, and planned by an eye to which there is neither past nor future in its provisions for the dispensation of justice.

“Why,” continued Bonsor, “that leaden cistern itself, we used to laugh at him for building; only he would have it. And it cost him a power of money. He had it made over the wood-house and coal-house, and built it upon great thick walls strong enough for a house. I shall never forget

when the bill came in for lining it with lead. But he made the best of it, and bade us not laugh, for one of these days we should find the use of it. I do not know if he thought any thing of the kind of doings we have had to-night, for at that time there were no mines opened here. But he always had a sort of superstition about that cistern ; and so have I."

It is wonderful with what avidity minds in moments of danger seize upon omens. The leaden cistern was something more than an omen. But even in this light it encouraged them ; and the party renewed their exertions to keep the aperture of the staircase closely blocked up with wet carpets. Apparently their efforts were successful. The flames roared underneath their feet ; vast whirlwinds of smoke gushed out of the lower windows, and swept round them, at times almost suffocating them ; but their position was still tenable. There was no necessity to keep watch at the windows ; they were protected from the attack of the assailants by the very flames which were threatening their destruction.

"Take care, do not waste the water," said Villiers ; "I think the fire is wearing itself out ;" when Brown came rushing to him in consternation. They had forgotten the back staircase. The flight of steps opened in a corner of the kitchen, which, being paved with stone, was the last part which the fire had reached. But it had penetrated there, had crept along the dressers and ranges of shelves, and had seized the stairs ; and volumes of smoke and flame were now bursting from the passage, on which it opened upon the first floor. Villiers hastened to the spot. They endeavoured to tear down the woodwork, but the fire would not allow of their approach. Water was thrown in every way possible upon the floor ; but their carpets and rugs had all been employed on the front stairs. And as Vil-

liers was hurrying to Bentley's room, that he might be removed to the attic, Bonsor met him, with a face of horrible despair, to tell him that the leaden cistern was exhausted. Villiers could only exclaim "God's will be done! Get your wife and your boys up stairs," he said; "there we may make another stand yet. Brown, help me to wrap Mr. Bentley in these clothes. Can you walk?"

"I will try."

"Make haste!"

And supported between Villiers and Bevan, Bentley was removed into the garret. To this there was but one staircase; and, as far as it was possible, they contrived to block this up in the same manner as before. And when all was done, they assembled in one of the rooms, and gazed upon each other's faces. Brown looked at his watch. It was near six, and broad daylight.

"Is there not an opening in the roof?" said Villiers. "Go, Brown, and see if the smoke will enable you to look out; it may command the road. See if they are coming."

Brown left the room. He had to pass through a dark sort of closet to reach the ladder which led to the trap-door in the roof. As he opened the door, by the dim light which streamed in he saw a figure crouched up in one corner, and glaring on him with eyes of defiance. Before he could return or advance a pistol-ball whizzed past him; and he threw himself upon the man. The rest heard the shot, and were with him in an instant. The miserable man was seized, disarmed, dragged to the light, and found to be covered with blood, and every feature of his face disfigured. He did not utter a word, but scowled on them like a fiend. He was evidently one of the assailants, and not of the meanest class. He, like Bonsor and the others, had been

stunned, and had recovered, but not till the house was on fire. He had been thrown by the explosion into a dark corner of the kitchen, in which no one had observed him; and when roused from his stupefaction by the flames, wounded as he was in his jaw, and in an agony of pain, he had managed to crawl up the back stairs. It was the only chance of escape; and he had hidden himself in the place least likely of discovery, resolved to prolong his life as long as possible, and planted, with his last bullet, to shoot the first man who approached him.

"Villiers, Villiers!" whispered Bentley, as he raised himself feebly from the mattress on which they had laid him, "that is the man who stabbed me!"

It was Wheeler. What would have been the conduct of the others on such a discovery had they been left to themselves, it is hard to say. They threw themselves on him even now, and perhaps would have hurled him from the window; but Bentley started up, and implored them to desist. Villiers himself rescued him. "Place him on the floor," he said. "Have you his arms?"

"Yes."

He bade the policeman stand over and watch him.

"Shall we tie him hand and foot, sir?"

"No," replied Villiers; "not here—not in such an hour—not when the house is on fire. Leave him to the just judgment of the Almighty."

And for a time their attention was withdrawn from him by a crash underneath. It was the falling of the first floor. For a few minutes there was a lull in the fury of the flames, and then they burst forth with redoubled violence. The smoke began to find its way through the crevices of the planks, notwithstanding the mode in which they had been

secured by the builder. The heat became intolerable; huge flakes of fire swept up into the air, and fell again upon the roof, and threatened to kindle that. It was evident that all was over.

"Open that window," said Villiers, "the wind sets off from that quarter."

And Brown went to it and looked out. In doing so he roused the poor landlady from the stupefaction in which she was lying while Bevan and Bentley were praying. She had sunk down in one corner of the room; her husband had seated himself by her side, and held her in his bosom. The two boys had nestled themselves at her feet, and she had clasped both their hands in hers; and with her eyes closed, as if she dared not look on them, she was muttering to herself. Once she opened her eyes, and saw the poor servant-maid crying as if her heart would break. Poor Mary was alone, without a friend. She herself would perish with those she loved best. It was a consolation; and she beckoned to the poor girl to come and sit down beside them. They were all speechless; only the mother at times muttered a few broken words—"To die such a death! To be burnt alive, and they so young! My poor boys—my beautiful boys! To be burnt to death! Help," she cried, and rushed to the window. "Help! help, in the name of Him who died for you! Will you burn us alive—mother and children, husband and wife—who never harmed you?" But her voice was lost in the roaring of the flames. Nor was there any one to hear: the crowd had dispersed; all round the house was empty; two boys only were standing in the yard.

"They are young like you," she cried. "You have a mother. Would you like to see her burnt to death?" and she stretched herself out of the casement, till one of the boys, with fair hair and

delicate features, which strangely contrasted with his poor dress, caught sight of her. "There are ladders," she cried, "there are ladders: put them up here, up by the cistern—here under the window,—for the love of God, for the love of God!"

And the fair boy, evidently horrified, endeavoured to move a ladder which lay on the ground, where it had been brought by the assailants to scale the walls; but his strength was unequal to it. Villiers came to the window. It was the poor boy whose life he himself had saved from a similar fate. The boy caught sight of him, and uttered a loud cry. "Help! help!" he said to his coarse sturdy companion, who only cursed him for a fool. And, as the poor fellow was endeavouring to move the ladder, he received a slap on his face from behind, and the same figure which has so often appeared, appeared once more, and harshly bidding them both come with him, and not meddle with what did not concern them, he dragged him away. Villiers saw this; but, as he looked up, he saw something else. "They are coming, they are coming!" he cried; and the troop of dragoons appeared in full gallop on the brow of the bill. It was a moment of intense suffering. There was help close at hand; but it would reach them too late. The low room was already filled with a dense smoke; the heat was intolerable. There were sounds of something falling beneath them, as the ceiling was giving way, and the floor in several places seemed sinking. At Villiers's exclamation they had all fallen on their knees, all but Wheeler, who, with his face crouched as close as possible to the floor that he might escape the smoke, lay perfectly silent, but evidently in great agony; and, as Bevan prayed aloud, his features settled into a horrible expression of scorn and despair. A few minutes more must bring the

troops to them ; but the delay of a minute might be fatal, and it might be some time before they could be discerned : and Villiers rose to go to another window, and endeavour to enlarge the opening, to give more air. As he looked out from it he observed the leaden cistern. It was at a considerable depth beneath him ; but he resolved to venture. The cords of the beds were taken out, knots were tied in them, one end was made fast round a bedstead, and in the midst of the inexpressible anxiety of all who gathered to watch his descent, he climbed through the window and slid down the rope. It swung fearfully as it received the weight ; but he had been accustomed in youth to gymnastic exercises, and, setting his feet against the wall, he contrived to land himself safely on the brickwork edge of the cistern. But his foot had no sooner touched it than he endeavoured to spring up again and hold by the rope. His ankle had touched the brick, and was blistered with the heat, for the store of wood and coal which were deposited in the place underneath had been set fire to, and had acted as a furnace. He clung to the rope with all his strength, as it swung backwards and forwards violently over the cistern ; and, as his eyes turned down they saw a sight enough to appal the stoutest heart, for the bottom over which he was swinging was full of melted lead. Even now his presence of mind did not forsake him. As the rope swung over to the edge he arrested it with his foot, landed on the narrow brink — all but lost his balance, and fell backwards into the cistern ; but with a desperate plunge he recovered himself, and the next moment threw himself on the ground. He fell upon his face, half-stunned, shattered, and bruised, but with his senses still awake. As he rose upon his feet, he heard the dragoons galloping

into the street; and a shout from the window over his head told him there was not a moment to lose. In an instant he was in the front of the house. Some dragoons had dismounted. Together they rushed into the yard, and the ladder was raised to the window from which he had himself descended: it was the only one accessible. He would himself have mounted, but was conscious that his wounded arm and bruised frame rendered him less serviceable than others. The sergeant therefore ascended the ladder. The women were placed on it, and reached the ground safely. Bonsor and Brown were preparing to lower Bentley from the window next; but just then a part of the floor began to give way. Bentley entreated them to save themselves: he was prepared for his fate. He would wait till the last. He entreated them not to think of him: and had nearly persuaded them to let the boys escape next, when, from the corner of the room in which he had been crouching, Wheeler sprang forward and thrust them aside. He leaped upon the window like a maniac escaped from his keeper. A prospect of saving his life once more opened; and he threw himself upon the ladder—his foot missed—he strove to recover himself, but in vain. He tottered—staggered—clung to it, but in vain; and Villiers saw him fall headlong into the cistern. There was a cry, such as no one then present had ever heard before—one of such unutterable horror, that, for years afterwards, Villiers would wake up in the middle of the night, as he fancied he heard it in his dreams, and the cold sweat would stand in drops upon his forehead. Villiers sprang upon the ladder. The miserable being had fallen upon his hands and knees in the pool of molten lead! He saw Villiers, and shrieked to him to save him. He called him by his name; but it was hopeless.

He offered worlds to save him! "Take me out! take me out! It is a hell! I will tell all—I can tell you all! Oh! Mr. Villiers, help me! I can tell you what you would give worlds to know. I have seen your papers—I know where your child is. Help me! help me!" And as Villiers, struck to the heart, was almost plunging in to rescue him, the poor wretch fell upon his face. It was all over. Bentley, Brown—all of them descended the ladder. They were saved—saved as by a miracle. They gathered round Villiers, who had saved them; but he had fallen against a wall, like one petrified. "I have seen your papers!" "I know where your child is!" The words rung in his ears—"I know where your child is!" Once more he sprang up the ladder, in the vain thought that all might not be lost; but he was dragged back by Brown and Bevan. There was a crash—a shock—the roof fell in—and it was all over.

"I always thought," said Bonsor to his wife the next day, "that that leaden cistern had been built for some purpose!"

CHAPTER XII.

WE must now pass over a space of three weeks, during which Villiers, by the strict injunctions of Mr. Morgan and Dr. Mayo, was confined to his room at the Priory. He suffered acutely from the injuries which he had received; and though he submitted patiently and calmly, the trial was most severe. His own feelings would have cast aside all thought of bodily anguish in the search for some clue to the few words which had been uttered by the miserable man Wheeler, and which in every waking hour, and even in his dreams, rang in his ears—"I know where your child is!" Even Villiers's patience and humility would scarcely have been proof against the authority which bound him to quietude at such a moment, had not Bevan and Beattie, and, with still more judgment and sagacity, Brown the superintendent of the police, undertaken to prosecute the inquiries for him, and engaged in it with an untiring zeal and affection, which Villiers's conduct and character had rapidly won from them.

There had been little difficulty in tracing through Cookesley, who had withdrawn from the outbreak as soon as he saw the direction which it was about to take, a connection between Wheeler and the mysterious Pearce; for Wheeler, incautious and passionate, had often suffered himself to speak before his companions on subjects on which Pearce himself studiously preserved the strictest reserve. Pearce himself had been traced to Hawkstone, and

even, by Miss Brook's assistance, to poor Margaret's lodging. But there all clue had ceased. Connell, and his wife, and boy—all had disappeared. Margaret, who might be supposed to know something of their visiter, was lying, in a state of insanity, in the hospital; and Beattie and Brown were at this time in London, endeavouring to procure some aid from the information of the London police. Their return was expected this evening; and Villiers, with the assistance of a stick, was slowly pacing up and down the long library of the Priory, while the shadows fell darker and darker; and at every sound of rustling leaves or moaning wind which could be possibly mistaken for the crushing of wheels, he started, and his heart beat, while he listened at the windows,—all in vain. It is a dreary hour, that twilight before the curtains can be closed and the lamps lighted; when nature is darkening without, and all is cold and vacant within. And Villiers, as he looked round upon the heavy, gloomy recesses of the library, and then out upon the range of park, which stretched, without sign of human habitation, far into the wooded recesses of the hill-side, thought within himself of solitude. He was rich, he was master of possessions which the world might envy. The earth lay before him with all its charms, if they had been charms to him. The cup of life had indeed been quaffed, and its bitterness had been tasted—exquisite bitterness even at the brim! Still the years of a manhood full of energy and promise stretched out to tempt him to indulge in any dream of ambition which rank, and genius, and power, and influence could dare to form. And yet upon Villiers's heart there lay a dead, cold, aching void. He was solitary. There was no one to share his existence, to renew his being. And though Villiers knew that the solitude of a Christian was far

other than that of the worldling, the knowledge was not yet (alas! how rarely can it be) realised, and incorporated with consciousness. He was abandoning himself to a morbid reflection and commiseration upon his own condition, when his eye fell upon the picture of Lady Esther, which now hung over the fire-place in the library, and it operated, as it always did, to recal him from himself to others. He thought of that dreary solitude of the heart in which his mother's last years had been spent upon earth. Then his memory glanced upon poor Macarthy, and on the loneliness which must have fallen upon him had his life been spared, and he himself had become an outcast from his own faith and Church, without any shelter in the Church of England to receive him in that fearful crisis. Then he turned to Bentley, and took up, and tore with indignation, a printed paper which had been sent to him that morning, and in which Bentley's name was mixed up with some slanderous and cruel insinuations. And he foresaw that Bentley himself was about to be exposed to a fearful struggle, in which he stood alone, with scarcely any but Villiers to support him.

And then his eye fell upon a portfolio of drawings which lay upon the table near him; and, as if summoning up resolution to recal his thoughts from morbid meditation upon solitude to immediate practical efforts to provide a consolation and relief for it, he rang the bell, and desired the servant to make his compliments to Mr. Plasmer, and if he had finished his wine, to say that Villiers would be happy to see him in the library.

Mr. Plasmer, the servant said, had dined immediately after his return from his walk into the park; and in about five minutes the gentleman made his appearance.

Now Mr. Plasmer was a fashionable architect and designer, and had been recommended to Villiers by a nobleman who knew his reputation, though utterly incapable of estimating his powers of art; and having arrived from London the same afternoon, he was now ushered into Villiers's presence. Villiers received him kindly; he would have received him cordially; but there was a fluency and ease about Mr. Plasmer's manner which produced the very opposite effect upon Villiers. And the architect having seated himself, without being requested, in an easy chair, he proceeded to express his admiration of the Priory, and of all that it contained.

"Only a few touches, Mr. Villiers, wanted here and there; a slight artistic finish to be given to the details; a little more rounding off of outline, and you will be complete, as I was saying to my friend Lord George the other day."

But if there was one thing which offended Villiers's fastidious taste, it was an assumption of pretended intimacy with persons of high rank; and it induced him to do what he rarely endured to do, to interrupt Mr. Plasmer in his sentence, by asking if he had walked towards the ruins?

"Indeed, yes, Mr. Villiers," replied Plasmer; "and charming they are—wondrously picturesque, and lovely. What a pity that you cannot command them from your dining-room windows here."

"I fear," answered Villiers coldly, "that the sight of buildings in ruins, which had been dedicated to religion, would not, from choice, form any part in a landscape which I should like to command from my dining-room windows."

"Indeed! No! Ha! Mr. Villiers, certainly not," replied Mr. Plasmer, somewhat perplexed to understand Villiers's meaning.

"I was induced, sir," said Villiers, gravely, "to

request your assistance in restoring and repairing a portion of those ruins, which I am unwilling to permit to remain in their present state."

"Indeed! ha! certainly," said Plasmer, "they are gone a leetle—leetle too far. The east gable requires a leetle propping. I suppose, Mr. Villiers, you will turf down the chapel, and plant flowers? A lady's flower-garden, judiciously managed, will look charming under the east window. Some of my new designed Gothic trellis-work will be quite delicious there."

"No," answered Villiers, with increasing coldness; "I am desirous not of turning a consecrated building into a flower-garden, but of restoring it to a more proper purpose."

"Ha! indeed! certainly, Mr. Villiers," replied Plasmer. "Something useful and ornamental too—I understand. Farm-buildings? Ha! or a conservatory? Charming things are Gothic conservatories, in the florid style. And yet, Mr. Villiers, farm-buildings group well in Gothic. It was but the other day I put a superb cast-iron window, pointed, in the florid style, into the gable of my friend the Marquis's new stables at Matchambury Park. We tossed up a little spire for a pigeon-house, ran a new light battlement and pinnacles round the pig-sties and cart-house; and you can't think what a charming composition they made—quite in the abbey style; and made a lovely point from his terrace—quite natural."

"I fear you have mistaken me," said Villiers, slowly; "it is not my intention to profane a religious building by converting it into pig-sties and stables; and if I were building such things from the ground, I should certainly not wish them to be in the abbey style. My object is to restore the chapel as a chapel."

"Ha! certainly! indeed, Mr. Villiers," said Plasmer. "Very noble! very liberal! Charming to see the number of churches which are rising every day. I have built ten myself within the last two years, 1200*l.* each—no more, I assure you—cheap as dirt."

"It is not my wish," said Villiers, "to raise a building dedicated to such a purpose as a chapel with that which costs me nothing." He began to despair of Mr Plasmer; but he still ventured to add, "I was informed that you were practically acquainted with the details of Gothic architecture, and could assist me in obtaining accurate admeasurements and mouldings from the portions which still remain."

"Indeed! ha! certainly, Mr. Villiers," said Plasmer, with a self-satisfied smile; "few men of the age, I flatter myself, are such perfect masters as myself of the delicate touches, the true taste, the fine theory of a genuine Gothic style. It was I, sir, that fitted up that gem, as Mr. Robins judiciously called it, that gem and jewel of art, Carnation Abbey, on the banks of the Thames, at Putney. My stucco, Mr. Villiers, stood wonderfully well there. When Alderman Hobson bought it—a dull man that, sir—mere city-bred, no taste, but abundance of cash"—and Mr. Plasmer, to Villiers's great annoyance, looked at him with a vulgar smile of intelligence—"he sent for me. 'Plasmer,' said he, 'you see this box'—it was a mere square house; mahogany door in the middle, four windows in front, two steps, green verandah, round sweep, laurels, flower-borders, and distant view of the Thames through the chimneys of the gas-works. Nothing, Mr. Villiers, I assure you; positively a mere nothing. However, said the alderman to me, 'Plasmer,' says he, 'my good fellow, you know next

year I am to be Lord Mayor. I do not care for money. My daughters want a place ; something of the antique, they tell me. I took them this summer to see Tintern, and Netley, and Fountains Abbey ; they tell me something of that kind, you know. You are a clever fellow, you know, and can tell all about it. Arabella will explain to you better than I can. You may draw upon me, you know.' Well, Mr. Villiers, we set about it ; and we produced, sir — yes, out of that square four-windowed house — we produced 'the gem!' Only a few touches, Mr. Villiers. I had by me the iron frames of the Gothic windows ready made. We threw out a charming oriel in the middle — rather heavy for the wall, but we did it in wood and plaster to imitate stone, — put painted glass into the drawing-room windows — Scripture subjects, all of them, quite appropriate ; bought a lot of armour, which we hung up in the hall — only ten feet square, but charmingly pretty ; solemn rather — little light, dark roof, coats of arms, and stags' horns — all that kind of thing —"

But here, to Villiers's great relief, the servant interrupted Mr. Plasmer's loquacity by bringing lights and closing the window-curtains.

"And yet, sir," resumed Plasmer, before Villiers could change the subject, "this was but a mere toy. I used to smile when the alderman talked of the Abbey ; but he was proud of it : and, indeed, though I say it, he had reason. It was a gem. But my great work — my *Capo d'Opera*, Mr. Villiers — you understand Italian — was at Lord Gormanburgh's — magnificent place that — I fitted up his dining-room there at an enormous cost. 'Plasmer,' said he, 'my good fellow' (for indeed he knew that I had a great regard for him) — 'Plasmer,' said he, as we were walking one day in the picture-gallery, arm-in-arm, 'you must fit up my new dining-room. I

know your taste. It must be Gothic, pure Gothic, every thing appropriate ; spare no expense ; draw upon me : only, as I said, let it be all appropriate.' Well, Mr. Villiers, we set to work — he and I together, and we produced — Ha ! I see you never saw it. But it was something quite beyond all description. Indeed, I may say I exhausted all my powers upon it. It was my *chef-d'œuvre*. You understand French, of course, Mr. Villiers ?”

Villiers bit his lip, and made a faint attempt to incline his head in token that he was listening, but he could scarcely succeed.

“ Well, Mr. Villiers,” continued the unexhausted architect, delighted with the silence of his new listener — “ well, Mr. Villiers, I had by me a lot of the most charming oak-carving from a church at Antwerp — all Scripture subjects, and the stalls beautifully executed, with angels’ heads, and pinnacles and pannels — all that sort of thing, you know. Well, we ranged them round the sides of the room, and they looked charmingly — quite in the purest style. Luckily, the billiard-room was next to the dining-room ; so we knocked down the partition, made an entrance through a charming arch, with clustered pillars and mouldings, lighted the new room with lancet windows, and placed the sideboard at the end on three steps. Gormanburgh — ” Here Villiers writhed a little, as unable to bear any more, but Mr. Plasmer was insensible to the movement — “ Gormanburgh,” continued Mr. Plasmer, “ would insist on having a splendid cellaret. He gave capital wines — capital,” he repeated, and smacked his lips ; “ sometimes drank a little too hard, but that was all his friends’ fault — men of the turf, you know — fond of hard living. However, what were we to do for the cellaret ? when, luckily, I procured a model of a charming font, the one at Lynn, canopy crocketed,

with pinnacles and niches—all that kind of thing.” Villiers writhed again, and attempted to stop Mr. Plasmer ; but he was beyond the control of a sign. “As for the sideboard,” he continued, “we had it modelled in stone from Edward I.’s altar-tomb in Westminster Abbey. Gormanburgh had some magnificent gold plate, church plate, which he had bought in Spain when the monasteries were plundered—chalices, patines, flagons, and that kind of thing. I recommended him to buy a couple of silver gilt candelabra, quite appropriate ; and when he gave his grand dinners, I cannot tell you how splendid it looked—all on the al——I mean the sideboard.” Villiers half rose from his seat, but to no purpose.

“But the best thing after all,” added Mr. Plasmer, imperturbably, “was his pictures. He had some splendid paintings, which we placed about the room, with sideboards under them—all appropriate, especially three lovely Martyrdoms, and a magnificent St. Jerome—fine colouring, delicate flesh-tints—the expression of agony wonderful. We had lamps so managed as to throw a full light upon them, so that we could see them while sitting over our wine—quite a feast of art. Gormanburgh was fond of art, *à ravir*. You understand French, Mr. Villiers. Well, sir,” continued Plasmer, “at the other end of the room we built a gallery—three pointed arches, clustered columns, pinnacles, niches, all appropriate, and in this we placed the organ. Gormanburgh was passionately fond of music, sacred music especially, and would always have it played during dinner. The last time I dined with him we had the Stabat Mater after the first course, and the Requiem—Mozart’s Requiem—during the dessert: it was quite delicious,—so soothing—the whole thing—all in character—so appropriate.” Villiers sat perfectly still and motionless. At last Mr. Plasmer came to a close.

“ But I have reserved one triumph. It certainly was the chimney-piece. I had by me a most magnificent group of carving from the abbey of St. Jacques, in Belgium—old oak, charmingly executed, —angels, and that kind of thing,—subject, the Day of Judgment; in the middle a most splendid group of the Virgin and Child, crowned by —— ”

“ Stop, sir,” cried Villiers, with a voice of intense horror and indignation. “ Do you know of what you are speaking ? ”

Poor Mr. Plasmer nearly jumped from his chair. But Villiers took no notice. He rang the bell, and ordering the servant to take coffee for the architect into the drawing-room, he apologised briefly for cutting short the conversation; and Mr. Plasmer, though somewhat dismayed, and wholly unconscious of any offence which he had committed against either good taste or good feeling, bowed himself out of the room.

As the door closed, Villiers could not help exclaiming, “ And this, then, is art in England in the nineteenth century ! And such is the horrible profanation to which the romance of religion, without its spirit, is leading those who ought to make every work of the hand, as of the mind, minister to holiness and devotion. Art, in the hands of vulgar and mercenary tools, detached from all high philosophy, from all practical piety, turned into a puppet-show, or a painted gewgaw, or made a mere toy for sale at some paltry exhibition, — art, which can dare to place the triumphs of saints and the agonies of martyrdoms as an object to luxuriate on in a banquet-room — art, which can rifle churches to furnish drawing-rooms, and mix, like another Belshazzar, the holiest vessels of the most awful mysteries with the cups to be drained in debauchery — art, which rather than forego the decoration of a room will preserve

and admire what the Scriptures denounce as an idol, and what cannot but be horrible blasphemy. Alas!" thought Villiers, "if we condemn as priestcraft, and superstition, and pious fraud, the employment of art by popery for the purpose of ruling minds and warming hearts to mistaken piety, what shall be said of our use of it to generate nothing but profaneness?"

He sighed deeply, and then, to relieve himself, he opened the portfolio which lay before him, and in which, with his own hand, he had sketched out his proposed restoration of the ruins of the Priory. There was the chapel rising with its lofty roof, its pinnacles, and its tower in the centre of the group. Close by it was the Hall, with its oriel restored, and the porch with its flight of steps, and its tall windows, less ornamented than those of the chapel. Round it, in a little quadrangle opening to the south under a cloister, were ranged the buildings intended to be occupied by the tenants of the edifice. They were low, yet beautifully broken with buttresses, and dormers, and clustered chimneys; and Villiers, who possessed an exquisite taste for landscape gardening, had struck out a few hints upon the paper of a green sward running in between the buttresses, and sprinkled with shrubs and trees. At one side he had added a projecting mass of building, under which he had written in pencil, "School and Dormitory;" and in a separate group, only connected with the main building by a low cloister, and looking out upon the south bank, was a sketch of another set of apartments, under which he had also written in pencil, "Infirmery."

He was throwing in a few additional touches with his pencil, when the servant informed him that Mr. Plasmer would be glad to see him again. And before Villiers could either decline or accept the offer, the architect reappeared. He brought in his hand

a large roll of drawings, and begged, if Villiers had time, that he would just cast his eye over them, as it might assist them in their plans for the Priory. And without giving Villiers an opportunity of resistance he spread on the table before him a long regular mason-like elevation of a building with a centre and two wings exactly alike.

"This," said Mr. Plasmer, "is my drawing for the new United Anti-religious-distinction College, in the north of Ireland—Gothic, you see, Mr. Villiers, pure Gothic. Singular what a rage there is for all that is old. The institution itself quite a novelty, but the architecture all antique. I took Westminster Abbey for my model; scale smaller, but very like, except where the old architects failed. Centre building, the principal house, dining-room twenty-eight by eighteen, two drawing-rooms, folding doors, small study, capital kitchen and offices, butler's pantry, bath-room, four best bedrooms—every thing complete. Here you have in the wings admirable and commodious lecture-rooms, museums, library, reading-room—wings, you observe, regular,—three stories,—windows all pointed—mullions of wood—string course, corbels, bosses, and all that of my new patent stucco—stands the weather admirably, Mr. Villiers—we shall be able to take our mouldings in it at the Priory cheap as dirt."

As Mr. Plasmer paused, Villiers was compelled to make some reply, and he coldly observed that he was not fond of stucco in ecclesiastical buildings; and that every thing which might be done at the Priory he should wish to be real.

"Certainly, certainly," said Mr. Plasmer. "I made the very same remark to my friend, Sir George, when he was building his artificial ruin—ruin, Mr. Villiers, of an abbey, at Burnham Grove, near

Bristol. Sir George, said I, you must have something real, something to interest, a tombstone or two, or some fragments from Tintern: here they are, quite close to you: mere brick and mortar, I told him, was not enough for real genuine taste."

Villiers was silent, and then asked if there were any rooms for fellows, or any chapel, in the design of Mr. Plasmer's college.

"O, no," replied the architect; "no new colleges in the present day have more than a Principal or President, whatever they choose to call him. One person at the head is quite enough to make a college, if he has such a name. And as for the chapel, of course that could not be—the professor of Greek is a Unitarian, and the professor of Chemistry a Baptist. It was never dreamed of."

"And what is the salary of the Principal?" asked Villiers. "With so large a house he must require a considerable income."

"Twelve hundred a year," replied Mr. Plasmer. "The committee have guaranteed him that. They could not procure a first-rate scholar for less."

Villiers sighed, and begging that the architect would excuse his wishing to be alone that evening, he once more rang the bell, and bowed him out of the room. Much that he had heard would have appeared exaggeration; but his eye glanced on the newspapers on a table near him; and there he remembered the programmes of fashionable concerts, in which the most awful subjects, the *Stabat Mater*, and the *Dies Iræ*, were blasphemously made the amusement of gay and laughing throngs, and, to divert the mind from their solemnity, were interspersed with light airs from operas, and sung by opera singers under the direction of prelates of the church. He had himself seen upon the sideboards of noblemen chalices and holy vessels, once conse-

crated for the altars of churches, and which were now supposed to be common, because, having been plundered by one hand, they had been purchased from the plunderer by another. And he had seen, even in London, houses fitted up in the midst of Regent Street as if they had been built in the days of Elizabeth, and in which religious carvings, profanely but superstitiously designed for holy buildings, were now still more profanely applied without a thought of the mysteries which they represented, or the idolatry which they contained, to support sideboards and decorate drawing-rooms.

Perchance, thought Villiers to himself, if art once more in England is to be elevated and consecrated and made the handmaid of religion and truth, it must find some blessed shelter in some holy place, where the minds which gave it birth may be nursed up in prayer and meditation, shielded from the vanities of the world, and the applauses of a mob, and the bribery of money. It may be that a religious home is as needful for the painter, and the sculptor, and the architect, and the poet, as for the philosopher and the priest.

And he rang his bell, and desiring two of his servants to wait in the ante-room, Villiers knelt down in prayer, and then summoning the attendants, he proceeded in their presence to fix his signature to some parchments which Mr. Atkinson had forwarded to him that morning. They were deeds making over to proper trustees, under the control of the bishop of the diocese, all that part of the Hawkstone estate which had been sacrilegiously obtained by his ancestors from the plunder of the Priory, that it might be employed under the direction of the bishop in establishing and maintaining a college of clergy and others in the restored Priory, for the perpetual celebration of divine wor-

ship, the spiritual care of the parish, the education of the young, the care of the poor, the visitation and comforting of the sick, and as a refuge for the destitute and the penitent.

An iron chest stood in one corner of the room, and he affixed his seal to it and directed a label upon it. It contained the great pall, the gilded cup, the illuminated manuscript—all that he could find among the so-called curiosities of the house, which had been plundered from holy places, especially from the Priory.

Another parchment remained to be signed. It contained a surrender of all the tithes of Hawkstone, which had been in the possession of the family ever since the time of Elizabeth, to the bishop of the diocese, for the purpose of being applied in the most efficacious and fitting manner to supply the spiritual wants of the town of Hawkstone.

And when this had been done, Villiers once more knelt down and prayed and gave thanks, and rose up from his knees deprived of one-fourth of his income, but lightened of a heavy burden upon his conscience and his fears.

Villiers had scarcely done this, when the noise of wheels was heard, crushing on the gravel as they advanced up the sycamore avenue. He endeavoured in vain to interpret by the sound whether they would bring to him tidings of good or of ill, of hope or of despair. He was on the point of hastening to the door in eager expectation; but, chastened and subdued with sorrow, and still more with religious resignation, he mastered his impetuosity, and though his heart beat thickly, he waited patiently for the appearance of Bevan.

And Bevan it was, accompanied with Brown and Beattie. But they uttered no cheerful sounds as they descended from the carriage; they waited to take

off their cloaks in the hall, as having no object in hastening to see him ; their footsteps moved slowly across the stone pavement, and the moment Villiers saw their faces, he perceived that they had made no discovery : their search had been wholly baffled.

There was a momentary gush of tears into Villiers's eyes—a cold dead chill of disappointment—a something of complaint ; but he shook it off in an instant, lifted up his eyes in humble prayer for forgiveness and for patience, and then exerted himself to dispel the gloom which hung over his visitors. He rang for refreshments, and partook of them cheerfully with them ; and cheered with the sight of his self-command, their own hearts became lightened. Only upon Bevan's face there remained a gloom which could not be shaken off ; and when at the usual hour the servants had been called in and the full evening service performed, and the rest having retired, he was left alone with Villiers, he proceeded to explain the reason. Villiers learnt from him that, notwithstanding all the efforts which had been made to prevent observation or gossip on the subject of Bentley, all the circumstances relating to his disappearance had been made known, and were become the subject of general conversation, but mixed up with the same kind of exaggerations and scandalous insinuations as had been suggested to themselves. Nor was this confined to mere gossip. It seemed as if some hand was busily and bitterly engaged in giving them publicity. The most virulent attacks had been made upon him in print, the walls were scribbled over with his name, placards were stuck about, the purport of which could not be mistaken, and even the children in the streets were taught to assemble and sing songs under his window. Bevan had at first endeavoured to conceal this from him as he lay confined to his bed, but he had been obliged

at last to communicate it to him, and to urge upon him the necessity of meeting the calumny boldly and openly. But Bentley was distracted by the remembrance of his oath. He had bound himself to be silent on all that had occurred that evening, and nothing would induce him to break his oath. In vain Bevan suggested to him that the obligation of an oath so imposed was, to say the least, most questionable—that the explosion had made the chief secret public—that of those who might be affected by his disclosures, many had perished and others had already been seized by the hand of justice. Bentley swerved not. He asked Bevan if he was satisfied with his innocence; and when Bevan gave him a full assurance of it, Bentley pressed his hand and said that was enough: the rest must be left to Heaven. He never could violate his oath.

But Bevan felt that his friend over-calculated his strength, and estimated too low the nature of the struggle which he would have to sustain. He trembled for the consequence; and though Villiers endeavoured to dispel his apprehensions, and declared his own determination to support Bentley through any trial of the kind, neither of them could disguise from himself the difficulties and dangers which awaited him. Bevan, however, saw that Villiers was not yet sufficiently recovered to bear more excitement, and postponing any further consultation, they parted for the night.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE next morning Villiers was seated in the library soon after breakfast, and was examining with Bevan some of the old records of the Benedictine establishments in England, that he might select from them whatever seemed most suitable for carrying his object into effect in the restoration of a religious community at the Priory. But they were interrupted by a gig driving up to the door, and the announcement of Mr. O'Foggarty, who has before been mentioned as the Roman Catholic priest recently established at Hawkstone, and who, it was now understood, was to undertake the office of domestic chaplain to Lord Claremont during his residence at the Park, the good Abbé St. Maur being about to return to France. Mr. O'Foggarty was not, as might be expected from his name, one of those dark, scowling, coarse, violent men who have been the appropriate growth of Maynooth, and are the curse of Ireland, as they are the bitterest enemies of England: those who distribute the offices and regulate the policy of the Church of Rome are far too wise so to misplace their instruments. He was bland, polished, and insinuating in his manners, liberal in his doctrine, obsequious in his attentions, and possessed of a fluency of language and of a smattering of various accomplishments, which rendered him an agreeable addition to society, and enabled him to exhibit to the few inhabitants of Hawkstone who ventured to make his acquaintance, a picture of the Romish Church so unlike the stern,

sanguinary, blackened, and mysterious character with which it was invested to their eyes by the traditions of the reign of Queen Mary and the novel of 'The Monk,' that their wonder was only equalled by their gratification, and their willingness to know more of a system seemingly so amiable, and so traduced.

Mr. O'Foggarty apologised to Villiers for his intrusion with the ease and courtesy of a man perfectly conversant with the world; and Bevan having retired, he proceeded to explain the nature of his business, which related to the payment of an annual sum of money, which had been left by Lady Esther for religious purposes. Even Villiers, acute as he was in the perception of character, and fastidiously alive to any thing like hypocrisy or insincerity, was touched by the mode in which Mr. O'Foggarty alluded to the character and the trials of his mother.

O'Foggarty recognised the picture over the fireplace, and gazed on it silently for a few minutes. He then spoke of her charities, and of the interest which she had always taken in the religious welfare of Hawkstone, so far as she could assist the labours of her own communion.

"Mr. Villiers, I am sure," continued the speaker, "will pardon me for thus dwelling on the faith and on the zeal of one who, if human thought may judge, is now a saint in heaven. Even though he may differ from the doctrines and system in which her faith was purified, he, I am convinced, is not so illiberal as to confine the terms of salvation to his own communion." Villiers was silent. And Mr. O'Foggarty then touched on the unfinished state of the new Romish chapel, and after some general professions of liberality, to which Villiers lent a very cold and incredulous ear, the speaker thought he might venture on requesting a contri-

bution for it from Villiers, interested as he must be in the welfare of Hawkstone, and having, indeed, on his own estate, several families who were Romanists themselves. He added, that if it were a matter of principle, perhaps he might have hesitated in making the request; but that, as Villiers was already under an engagement to pay a certain sum towards the same object, any addition to it would not involve a question of principle.

To Mr. O'Foggarty's evident chagrin, Villiers replied briefly, that to discharge a debt was one thing, and to make a voluntary donation another; that his own conscientious opinions were noway involved in paying over to the furtherance, even of a system which he condemned, that which he only held in trust for it; but that he had long since felt the solemn obligation of abstaining from giving any support, however speciously claimed, to any other religious community in England but the Catholic Church. "You must excuse me," he added, "for carefully employing these words, since upon them my allegiance to my Church is founded."

Mr. O'Foggarty endeavoured to assume a smile. "And might I ask," he said, "if, as I must suppose, you deny the same title to the Church of Rome, and confine it to the established communion of England?"

"I have no right," replied Villiers, "and no inclination, to enter into a controversy at this moment on such a subject. But believing the English Church to derive its ministry from apostolical authority, its creeds and its doctrines from apostolical truths, and in all essential points (however its individual members may have sinned) to be in accordance with the ancient Catholic Church; I cannot but consider an unauthorised intrusion into her province as gratuitously schismatical; and

I cannot well reconcile the notion of schism with the title of Catholic. But you will pardon me if I decline such a discussion, and content myself with stating, thus briefly, the reasons why I cannot offer you any assistance whatever in propagating a system which, even on this ground only, I must believe to be inconsistent with Christian charity, and destructive of divine truth."

"And yet," said Mr. O'Foggarty, "a landlord cannot be indifferent to the spiritual interest of his tenants and dependants; and for their sake may I not ask for some trifling assistance to the funds which are devoted to their benefit!"

"I trust," replied Villiers, "that I do feel interested — deeply interested — solemnly responsible for the spiritual as well as for the temporal welfare of those whom the hand of Providence has placed under my care. But it would little contribute to their welfare to show myself indifferent to religious truths, to assist in rearing them in a faith which I believe to be false, to aid in fomenting those schisms which must in the end destroy all religious belief in Romanists as well as in others. It will be my duty to take care that the truth shall be, at least, offered to them, that opportunities of hearing it, and of studying it, be provided for them, and that they be warned of the errors into which they have fallen. And this duty I hope to perform."

"And am I to understand, then," said Mr. O'Foggarty, with a tone of bitterness, "that Mr. Villiers meditates disturbing the peace and harmony of this place by a system of proselytism, and will endeavour, by the influence of his name and property, to withdraw his dependants from the faith of their ancestors."

"Rather, you should say," replied Villiers, "recall them to the faith of their ancestors; for no one

who understands what Christian truth is would undervalue the principle of hereditary religion. But I am unwilling to say any thing which may seem unnecessarily harsh and painful to a gentleman whom I have no reason to suppose is acting otherwise than conscientiously in maintaining his religious system."

"I should have hoped," said Mr. O'Foggarty, "that, in these enlightened days, Mr. Villiers would have been more disposed to recognise the principle that each individual should be allowed to choose his own religious doctrines; and that, as the State has no right to interfere with them, so neither has the landlord."

"Sir," replied Villiers, "will you pardon me for saying that I have resided long in Roman Catholic countries, and have had many opportunities of studying the Roman Catholic system. To me, therefore, I am sure you will not think it worth while to address such sentiments which cannot be the sincere opinion of any true Roman Catholic; which are in themselves erroneous—I might say false; and which are so vitally opposed to the whole system and spirit of Romanism, that in the mouth of a Romanist they sound to me ——"

Villiers paused, and hesitated to finish his sentence, lest he should use words too faithfully representing his own indignation at the imposition which his visitant was attempting to practise on him.

Mr. O'Foggarty, however, was not abashed. "I conclude," he said, "that Mr. Villiers will not dispute the principle that laymen, however gifted and however zealous, are not the persons to whom the task of proselytism has been especially appointed."

"Assuredly," replied Villiers; "but to laity, as well as clergy, has been appointed the task of watching over the welfare of their brethren, and of pro-

moting the glory of the Almighty—if not by preaching in the congregation, yet by ministering to the wants of the preachers, and supplying to them the means of executing their duty.”

“Alas!” said Mr. O’Foggarty, “I fear that this spirit of proselytism can only engender strife, and destroy our mutual amity. To its virulence and mistaken zeal we owe nearly all the bitterness of religious life in this age.”

“I should not have expected,” said Villiers, “that a clergyman of the Roman Catholic Church, of which the distinctive feature and paramount maxim is the unwearying duty of proselytism, would employ such language.”

O’Foggarty slightly coloured.

“I do think,” continued Villiers, “that to the spirit of proselytism, indulged by unauthorised persons—proselytism, not to the simple definite faith committed to us by heaven, but to our own super-added dogmas and opinions—proselytism, carried on in defiance of that order and discipline which was established by the Church of the Apostles, and of primitive times—to this I do think that we owe nearly all the miseries and dangers which beset the Catholic faith. But I mean not to give offence, when I repeat that an agent of the Romish Church is the last person to condemn such a spirit, with which all his own ministerial functions in this land must be tainted; and I must distinguish from it most strongly the proselytism enjoined by our Lord upon all his disciples—proselytism to the simple, unaltered, revealed faith of the Apostles; conducted by authorised ministers, and confined within those limits which apostolical practice has laid down for it.”

Mr. O’Foggarty coloured still more, but did not abandon his ground.

"Mr. Villiers," he said, "must be aware (not that I would venture to suggest to him for a moment any secular or worldly considerations) that we are not without influence in Hawkstone. I confess that I had dared to contemplate with hope the prospect of congratulating Mr. Villiers on that political eminence to which his vicinity to Hawkstone, and his long family connexion with the place, justly entitle him, without alluding to personal advantages of the highest order. A dissolution of parliament is expected every day."

Villiers's indignation was roused; and by the expression of his eye, though he remained perfectly silent, his visiter saw that he had mistaken the string on which he had touched.

"Far be it from me," he added hastily, "to suppose that Mr. Villiers would for one moment permit his conscientious practice to be swayed by worldly and selfish motives. This was far from my thoughts. But I did wish candidly and honestly to indicate, without reserve, the line which not only myself but others would feel it necessary to take in the event of——"

Villiers did not perplex him by waiting for him to finish the sentence, which he was endeavouring to round off in some ambiguous diplomatic phrase. "Mr. O'Foggarty," he said, "and every conscientious Christian, will of course endeavour, in every possible way consistent with Christian duty, to give weight and extension to those opinions which he sincerely believes to be true." And Villiers gave signs that he desired the interview to close. But O'Foggarty had left one string still untouched.

"I see," he said, in a tone in which he wished to express sorrow rather than anger, "that Mr. Villiers is prepared to reject any humble aid which our influence might offer to him in promoting the welfare

of this place. It is not for frail men like us to boast, and yet we cannot but exert great power over the minds of our flocks. To us are committed secrets which are hidden from every other eye." And as he uttered the words, he looked at Villiers significantly; but Villiers heeded him not.

"To us," continued O'Foggarty, still fixing his eye upon Villiers—"to us, mean and unworthy as we are, is intrusted in the holy Confessional the knowledge of things which no human power, no arm of strength, no dexterity of intrigue can detect, but on which the happiness and the fate of many depend. Inviolable as our secrecy is, we are yet allowed—nay, enjoined—to make our knowledge instrumental in redressing the injured, and" (here he paused, and bending his looks searchingly upon Villiers, he dropped his voice almost into a whisper) "in restoring the lost."

Villiers sprang up, but sank back again in his chair.

"Sir!" he exclaimed, in a voice choked and broken with emotion, "I charge you, in the name of Him from whom you hope for mercy, not to trifle with a miserable man! If you know any thing, I adjure you to speak! Have mercy upon me!"

O'Foggarty's countenance assumed a look of surprise, as if his words had meant nothing. "I fear," he said, "I must have touched inadvertently on some secret string of sorrow, of which I was wholly unaware. I should apologise for intruding so long on Mr. Villiers's time;" and he proceeded to draw on his gloves, and rose from his seat.

But Villiers also sprang up, and moved to the door; and though unable to speak, he motioned to his visitant to sit down. O'Foggarty still preserved the same affected look of surprise, but took his seat, and waited, as if in astonishment, for any

further communication. And Villiers soon recovered himself.

“Mr. O’Foggarty,” he said, more calmly, “will excuse me, if I ask him earnestly and solemnly whether the words which he has just uttered bore any deeper meaning than a mere generality. As a minister of Him who is the fountain of mercy, he will not trifle with the misery of any human being, however opposed to his religious system.”

His visiter made no effort to conceal a certain embarrassment and awkwardness of manner. “I was wishing,” he said, after a pause, “to explain candidly and honestly, and without any affectation of concealment” (it is singular how the most artful minds always boast most of their candour), “the principles which must regulate the ministers of our holy Church in their dealings with those in this country who are acting to it hostilely and bitterly. Mr. Villiers himself would not expect that, trampled on as we have been, plundered, and persecuted, and maligned for years, and now only beginning to raise our heads from the dust, we should omit to employ every legitimate means to secure the approaching triumph of our holy faith. He cannot think us bound to assist the enemies of the truth.”

Villiers was silent, for he was too agitated to argue; and O’Foggarty, after a pause, continued, “I will speak openly, sir, and without reserve; I will offer to you all the assistance in my power in obtaining any thing which you most covet, in recovering any thing which you have lost; and my means are great. I would almost venture to say my success is certain; but it must be on one condition, that we receive from Mr. Villiers such a friendly co-operation and assistance in return as may be expected from the well-known enlargement and liberality of his sentiments.”

He was silent; and Villiers had sunk down in his seat and covered his face with his hands. "Do I understand you, sir?" he said at last, "or am I interpreting your words to imply more than they really mean?"

"Mr. Villiers," said O'Foggarty, "may place upon my words any interpretation which he thinks fit. I have said all that I am at liberty to say, and my lips are sealed beyond. Mr. Villiers may best judge whether I have spoken idly, or am likely to offer what I cannot perform. But I must not trespass on you longer." And O'Foggarty once more rose, and his eye turned to an organ which had been just placed in one of the recesses in the library.

"Mr. Villiers, I perceive," he said, "is fond of music. I am myself a slight performer. Might I be allowed to touch this instrument?" And without waiting for permission, he opened it, and ran his fingers over a few keys, and then, while he fixed his eyes upon Villiers's face, he suffered the notes to sink into a soft gentle plaintive strain, at the sound of which Villiers fell back in his chair and gasped for breath: it was the Hymn to the Virgin.

"You know all, then," cried Villiers. "You can restore him to me. — Have mercy upon me!"

But O'Foggarty's face had once more assumed its look of surprise and vagueness. "I fear," he said, "that I have agitated Mr. Villiers by recalling to him painful associations. I should have been glad of some better opportunity to lay before him the cause for which I have ineffectually pleaded. Might I hope for permission to wait on you to-morrow; or may I even now return with the satisfaction of knowing that we shall experience from Mr. Villiers, not enmity, but friendship? Shall I leave with you this list of subscriptions to our poor chapel? Lord Morden, Mr. Villiers

will observe, has given the ground ; Lord Claremont has also aided us ; and Lady Eleanor, with whom I shall soon have the honour to be associated in this work of benevolence, and to be domesticated at the park as his lordship's chaplain. I will leave the paper with you, and call for it, if you allow me, to-morrow."

He went up to Villiers, and placed the paper in his hand ; and a by-stander might have seen a faint smile of triumph derange the composure of his features. "He is gained," he whispered to himself — "he is ours ; once sap the principle of resistance, and he will fall wholly into our hands." And he waited for Villiers's reply.

But Villiers rose from his chair ; he folded up the paper without looking at it, replaced it in O'Foggarty's hand, and requesting him to be seated again, he stood before him, and said, with a firm voice, —

"I wish, sir, to express to you once more, firmly and openly, and in a manner which I trust will preclude any further solicitation on the subject, that I can offer no assistance whatever to your religious operations in this country. Whether the words which you have uttered, and which have, indeed, awakened in me painful and bitter recollections, bear in them any deeper meaning, I will leave to your own conscience. Your system scruples not to sever the allegiance of subjects from their sovereign, and to make your co-operation in preserving the peace of nations and the order of society conditional upon the extension of favour to your cause from governments, who cannot favour it without compromising their own religious faith. It would, therefore, be little strange, that as you deal between the subject and the sovereign, so you should deal between a father and his child" (and

Villiers's voice faltered). "Whether such conduct be worthy of a ministry of heaven — whether it be an evidence of truth — whether it must not confirm those who abhor deceit and wrong in offering their most strenuous resistance to such a system, may be left for your own consideration. I cannot look to it for any aid. I must trust to Heaven alone. We must part, sir, at once; and I trust never more to be exposed to solicitations like the present upon any pretence whatever."

Villiers rang the bell, ordered Mr. O'Foggarty's carriage, sternly took leave of his abashed and disconcerted visiter; but ten minutes after, when the servant entered the room, he was found stretched upon the floor, insensible.

O'Foggarty knew nothing of this. The gig in which he had been driven to the Priory was waiting at the door, and in a short time he re-entered his own house in the town by the same little green garden door which has more than once been mentioned already. Adjoining to this, and within the garden, was a small tenement, seemingly uninhabited. And to this the priest bent his way, and knocking gently at the door of it, was admitted by some one from the inside into a small but not comfortless apartment. "So you are returned at last?" was the greeting which awaited him from a coarse, smooth-shaven, iron-faced, sinister-looking figure, respectably habited in black, and who, to prepare himself for facing a visiter, had assumed a large pair of green spectacles. "And you have fared as I prophesied, I suppose?"

"I have not been successful, certainly," said O'Foggarty to the inmate of the little mansion, in whom the reader, without requiring any assistance from us, will probably recognise Mr. Pearce.

Pearce laughed bitterly. "I told you," he said—

"I told them—I told them from the first ; and yet they will still persist in hoping to secure him. And now I am ordered off, and you are to try your smooth words and persuasive arts, as if they would do any good."

"We must not judge," said the priest, blandly, "by a single failure on the first attempt. The aspect of things is so different from what it was, and you yourself have been so compromised and mixed up with this late business in the Forest, that you must allow the necessity of withdrawing for a time at least."

"Yes," cried Pearce, sulkily ; "I could not well walk about the streets just yet, and shall not be sorry to be released from this miserable prison here. But what did he say?"

And O'Foggarty proceeded to recount all that had passed between himself and Villiers.

"And you touched him with the tune?" asked Pearce.

"Yes," replied O'Foggarty ; and he evidently felt it."

"And he knows that you know?"

"Evidently."

"But you did not commit yourself? You did not say any thing that he could take hold of?" said Pearce.

The other only replied by a contemptuous smile. "You imagine, I fear, Mr. Pearce, that no one understands these matters but yourself ; and yet, perhaps, there are gentle modes of proceeding more efficacious than even murder and rebellion."

Pearce moved as if stung to the quick by the suggestion.

"What I have done," he said, "has been done well ; no one dreamt of any other end than has happened. And we have gained all we wanted, and

shall gain more. Is not the ministry going out? Is not parliament to be dissolved?"

"And you will add, I suppose," said O'Foggarty, "Is not a good blow struck against the parliament church in Hawkstone? Has your emissary, the printer, been here to day?"

"Yes," replied Pearce, "I have given him another handbill; and I do not think the poor parson will stand it much longer. They must go to his bishop, and there must be an inquiry; and he cannot purge himself."

"And have you sent the paragraphs to the papers?"

"I have," said Pearce, "with capital letters and initials, and all that. No one can mistake it. The penny newspapers will have the whole story at full length."

"Remember," said O'Foggarty, looking grave and conscientious, "this is entirely an act of your own. It is no business of mine to throw a scandal even upon a Protestant and heretic; but if you think it will aid the cause——"

Pearce looked with ill-disguised contempt upon his companion, and then he said, "You do not mean to hint, do you, Mr. O'Foggarty, that you have any scruple about throwing dirt where dirt will stick, if it is our object, and the interest of our cause, that it should stick? We were not used in former days to be so very strait-laced and particular. Do you affect to regret, if that poor Bentley should be driven from his parish, and the field thrown more open to yourself, and your own rigid sanctity and unimpeachable virtue" (and Pearce smiled bitterly) "be favourably contrasted with his peccadilloes, and a bad name light upon all that he belongs to? Do you object to this?"

O'Foggarty affected to look indifferent, but his eyes

twinkled with the thought of the advantage which might be taken of the situation in which Bentley had become involved.

"I rather think," continued Pearce, "that it is not one of our maxims to abstain from such legitimate means of defence and annoyance."

O'Foggarty looked grave. "I cannot," he said, "interfere to prevent you from doing what you think may be beneficial to the good cause."

Pearce again smiled in scorn. "No!" he said, "the Church generally has not scrupled to make use of our assistance, even when openly she pretended to reprobate our acts. Where would Rome have been but for our arm? And how could our arm have saved her, if we had listened to the old wives' superstitions about means and ends? All means are justified by good ends; and all ends are good which benefit the one great cause. I think even the Catholic rector of Hawkstone is a little indebted to us."

"The title is rather premature, is it not?" said O'Foggarty; but he could not avoid smiling at the sound.

"Bah!" exclaimed Pearce contemptuously; "you smooth-faced, soft-speaking gentlemen always think every thing premature. If we had trusted to such as you, should we have now our bishops in Ireland, ay, and our rectors too, and our bishops recognised in an act of parliament, in the teeth of another act which expressly forbids it? How was this done but by courage? You fancied the Conservative ministers were bold and honest. We knew them to be cowards; and that with all their fine speeches, and conditions, and precautions, when they passed the Emancipation Act, they would not dare to enforce their own penalties. They served to gull the people; and that was all Sir Robert wanted. Ask him or

the Duke now to expel the unlicensed Jesuits, or prosecute a Catholic bishop for taking his own title; and hear what he would say — though it was his own bill, and his own promise to the fools who trusted in him.”

“I suppose he would say,” answered the other, sarcastically, “that the times were altered — that it was necessary to legislate according to circumstances — that however solemnly he had pledged his word at the time, he had not meant to preclude himself from modifying his opinions as events occurred — that it is idle to resist the current of general opinion — that to rule a liberalised nation, rulers must themselves be liberalised — that he really could not commit himself to a general principle — and that he was an honest man and a great statesman, and had reduced the Three and a half per cents, and therefore ——”

“And therefore the people must trust him,” interrupted Pearce. “Bah! for a set of fools! Why the Tories, or Conservatives, as they call them, have done more for us than all the Whigs put together.”

“Yes,” replied O’Foggarty, “the Irish education scheme, enlarged grant to Maynooth, endowments in Ireland, bishops in the Colonies, national education in England—all tell for us. And now they talk of their new liberal colleges in Ireland, as if they had never heard of us, or knew that to found a liberal college was the first step to putting it into the hands of the Jesuits. I wonder if any one of them ever heard a syllable of our history, or knew how we managed to make our way into them.”

Pearce joined in the laugh. “No,” he said, “do not be afraid of being premature. Call yourself at once what you ought to be. Have your letters directed to you ‘The Catholic Rector of Hawkstone.’”

It will compel that poor old paralytic to call himself the Protestant rector ; and then any one will be able to see that the Catholic must be the true, and the Protestant the false one — any one who has learned his creed. Think what this one word has done for us — how by using words of this kind exclusively, and allowing them to no other, we have prospered already.”

The other smiled assent.

“Then,” continued Pearce, “build up your chapel with a tower ; have a ring of bells in it. It stands well — just in the market-place. Every one will ask what it is. Make them call it a Church, or, rather, the Church — the Catholic Church of Hawkstone ; and when you speak of the other old building, call it the chapel, or, if you like, the conventicle. Keep your bells ringing from morning to night. It is not allowed by law, but who will dare to say any thing ? People will ask what it means ; and the answer will be that you are at prayers — three, or seven times a day — not twice in the week only, as elsewhere.”

“You are very kind in your suggestions,” said O’Foggarty, rather indignantly.

“My suggestions,” answered Pearce, “are very well worth attending to ; and, indeed, they are not mine —

‘ Sed quæ præcepit Ofellus,
Rusticus, abnormis sapiens.’

No ! abnormis sapiens is rather too strong for us ; but do not mind taking advice. Was it not my advice that you should get your chapel of a good handsome style — not like the barns, and sheds, and tawdry meeting-houses, which the establishment has been raising, at 1200*l.* a piece. People come to look ; and then they admire ; and then you say that it is

the old Catholic style—the true Christian architecture; and that you alone possess it; and that the design was given by a Catholic—if a convert, so much the better; and that *you* (mind and lay a stress upon *you*) do not like to build a church of that which costs you nothing. It is astonishing how this tells.”

O’Foggarty smiled.

“Then take care,” continued Pearce, “that the persons who show it kneel down when they enter. If you are there yourself, do not chatter and laugh, like the Protestants, as they walk about the aisles of their cathedrals, as if they were seeing a show-place. Keep the church open all day; people—poor people—always kneeling about. Get up a procession; hire twenty or thirty boys to walk before you in surplices; get a fine cross—not a crucifix—English people are not ripe for it. Sing as you go through the streets. Establish a guild, a confraternity, which will take more than a benefit-club; and give them a fine dress: the poorer the people are the better—the prouder they will be of walking to church amidst admiring eyes, dressed out in caps and vestments, and bearing tapers. Have a distribution of loaves. Take care only to deal with true Catholics, or likely converts. Get a book-seller; fill his windows with Catholic prints—some really good, others gaudy and striking, for the poor. Have tracts in abundance. Mind and attend all the public meetings, and speak charitably, religiously, but, above all, liberally. Sigh over the distractions of the Church. If you can find any young men from Oxford, get acquainted with them: lend them books—first Fénelon and Pascal, then Bonaventure, Liguori, and books like that. Show them your Sisters of Charity. Deal with them moderately and quietly. Abjure all images and superstitions. Talk

of faith, and unity, and peace, and the feudal times, and loyalty, and the middle ages—all that's romantic, you know. They do not know any thing about it, and will swallow all that you tell them. By-and-by, perhaps—who knows?—you may even get up a miracle." But the last suggestion was stated rather too coarsely and broadly for the more refined subtilty of O'Foggarty, and he moved as if in disgust.

"Ah!" said Pearce, "you affect to be shocked. But I ask you honestly—here we are, between ourselves—am I advising you any thing which is not practicable and practised? Is not this the way in which we have prospered hitherto?"

O'Foggarty could say nothing.

"I do think," continued Pearce, "that some have managed things rather stupidly. When they celebrate high mass, they have it placarded over the town, like a bill of the play; foreign singers—Mr. So-and-so to preside at the organ; seats three shillings, two shillings, one shilling; doors open at eleven o'clock; the Bishop of Negroland, that stupendous orator, to preach. Now Protestants sometimes do this; but I do not think it sounds well—it is too barefaced. And another man, I forget his name, used to give lectures, at Clifton, on sacred music—Catholic music; and promised, in his bills, to exhibit in the middle of them a famous crucifix, carved I do not know by whom, and worth thousands. Now any one can see through this. I would rather take the high tone—fasting, you know, and the hours, and the breviary, and unity, and Sisters of Charity, and self-denial. It will tell far more with the Oxford men; and those are the persons to be looked to."

"Yes," said the other. "I stayed at Oxford myself, not long since, for a few days, and was surprised to find how I was fêted, and embraced, and

questioned ; and how ready they were to fly into one's arms."

"Not many?" said Pearce.

"No, not many," replied O'Foggarty—"a little set, about half a dozen."

"And mere boys?"

"Mere boys, who had just taken their degrees."

"Learned?" asked Pearce. "Did they know any thing about us?"

"Learned!" repeated O'Foggarty. "Bah!" and they both joined in a hearty laugh. "I would get hold of a newspaper," said Pearce—"a Whig one would do all you wanted. Since O'Connell helped them, it is astonishing how popish they are becoming. You may throw a little dirt, if you like, now and then, where it is wanted to stick. But I think more is done by praising yourselves. Get up good accounts of your festivals and processions. You have picked up ten or a dozen old men and women, who subscribe a penny a week, and you make a confraternity of them for honouring the memory of St. Bridget, or saying vespers at the altar of St. Winifred, or devoting themselves to the service and honour of the blessed martyr Saint Any-body. Well! you fix a day for the festival, wash out the school-room, stick up some laurel-leaves in it, dress the poor people up in their finery, get together as many priests as you can, and if possible a bishop, and have service. The next day comes out a paragraph in the paper, headed in large type, 'Celebrations of the Catholic Church. — Yesterday, at the magnificent new church of St. Radulphus, the largest church which has been built since the Reformation, was celebrated the solemn Festival of the blessed and devoted martyr So-and-So. Early in the morning the inhabitants were called to their devotions by the splendid peal of bells from that mag-

nificent tower, which has been raised at a vast expense, and may fairly be considered a model of true Catholic architecture. At twelve o'clock the procession formed in the Catholic school-rooms — put it in the plural number, it sounds grander — under the direction of Thomas Smith, Esq., H. Thomson, Esq., Robert Jenkins, Esq., Edward Jones, Esq., and other influential inhabitants of the neighbourhood. At the head walked the beloved, and learned, and pious pastor of the parish, the Rev. Patrick O'Foggarty, whose devotion, charity, and enlarged liberality,' &c. &c. You understand all this. Then bring in the venerated Bishop of Negroland, or whoever else it may be. Always call your bishops venerable, and learned, and holy prelates of the Church, martyrs, and the like. O'Connell does this, you observe. He kneels down before them in the dirt, and asks their blessing. It tells wonderfully at a distance. When he speaks of them, you would expect to see angels, or saints worn away with fasting, eyes dim with watching, lips that never speak but in words of peace and blessing. He talks of them and of the Irish priests, as if they were his idols, and no one could see them without adoring them as the very incorporation of holiness. O'Foggarty, were you ever at Maynooth?"

And O'Foggarty could not resist the laugh, in which Pearce joined.

"It tells well," continued Pearce, "notwithstanding. Certainly O'Connell is clever—he does understand it. As for the rest, you can easily manage it. 'Service grand and imposing—devotion of the people wonderful—many weeping, others fainting with joy—sermon, a wonderful defence of the true Catholic doctrine against heresy, worthy the learning, and talents, and continental fame of the vene-

rated preacher. Assemble afterwards in the school-rooms—tastefully fitted up—elegant collation—ladies, Protestants of rank, who took the deepest interest—prayers for the restoration of England to the Catholic faith—health of the Pope drank—then the Queen, then religious liberty all over the world, toleration, and so forth.’ Enlarge on the ‘reverential piety and solemnity which pervaded the whole meeting, and which is so singularly characteristic of the true Catholic Church.’”

“Then,” said O’Foggarty, with a smile, “you would not recommend that we should do as they do in Ireland, and hold a reform dinner in the chapel itself, with the altar turned into a sideboard, and the font into a wine-cooler.”

“No,” said Pearce; “this would not do in England. But they may do what they like in Ireland. People here believe nothing they hear of it.”

“No,” replied O’Foggarty; “I heard some one in Oxford mention this very fact in the set with whom I was staying; and they turned up their noses, and declared that it was false—it must be false,—though the relater saw it with his own eyes.”

“It is a blessed thing for us,” said Pearce, “that they are so unbelieving, otherwise awkward things would come out. They do work rather too strongly in Ireland. They manage their election matters, and their repeal rent, and their politics rather too coarsely. We must contrive things with more gentleness in England.”

“We need not fear,” said O’Foggarty. “From what I saw in Oxford, if a very demon were to rise up before them, and call himself the Pope, they would be ready to call him an angel, and deny their own senses, and the senses of others too.”

"Because they have got a fancy, and do not choose to have it disturbed,—is that it?"

"Yes," said O'Foggarty.

"Have any of them been abroad?" asked Pearce.

"Not that I know of," answered O'Foggarty. "Somebody has told them—this is their general answer—or they have read about it in Fénelon or Pascal; or they cannot find what they want in their own Church; and if you ask them what they do want, they cannot tell; only it must be something exciting, fervent, enthusiastic, romantic, and picturesque—something unlike the common."

Pearce grinned a malicious smile.

"And they talk about the fathers, don't they?" he asked.

"Not much now," said O'Foggarty. "They have got to their new doctrine of development, which does not require the fathers. One or two of them have read something, and these serve as references; and are ready to come forward and vouch for the statements, which the rest take from them; just as in the advertisement of a quack medicine, the person cured is always ready to give his name, if required."

Pearce once more laughed heartily. "A hopeful set, I must say; but, if they love us so much, why do they not come over to us?"

"Ay," said O'Foggarty, "that is a mystery; they say they are waiting—that they cannot come without others—that they must take their religion from their fathers, and do as their conscience tells them."

Pearce once more laughed, but more loudly than before. "And will any of them come soon, do you think?"

"I am sure I cannot say," said O'Foggarty. "They

seem to be out of their senses. If they believed the Pope's authority, they would come over at once, for they could not think of remaining out of the pale of salvation ; and if they believed their own Church, they could not acknowledge the Pope's, and thus they would not think of coming to Rome. But some one has told them that the oath which says that the Pope neither has nor ought to have any jurisdiction in this realm of England means only that he has none as a fact, and that the 'ought' is an expletive ; and so, perhaps, they imagine that they can remain in the English Church, and yet acknowledge the supremacy of Rome, and that the English Church says nothing of the Romish in this, as in other points, but what any clergyman who accepts the thirty-nine Articles may heartily subscribe to."

O'Foggarty spoke gravely, and Pearce did not laugh ; for even he was surprised, and felt something like disgust.

"And after all, then," he said, "they are only the merest Protestants, thinking and acting without any guide or authority whatever, mere Dissenters,—in fact, private-judgment men."

"They are blind men," answered O'Foggarty, "following their own noses ; and this they call faith."

"You must get some converts soon," said Pearce, "in this place. It tells wonderfully."

"There is old Mrs. Dennett," replied the other, "who keeps the little apple-stall at the corner of King's Street. I have talked to her a good deal. She is an Irishwoman, and a Catholic, but married a heretic soldier, and for years has gone to church. I think she will come round soon. She is very poor ; and I have offered her to sweep out the chapel."

"Yes," said Pearce ; "and you must get an account of it into the papers—the Irish papers especially,

and those which are at a distance ; but even close here it does not much matter what you say, for no one takes the trouble to read or believe a contradiction of a bold statement once put forward well. You must head it—Conversions to the Catholic Church. Something of this kind : ‘ The Progress of Divine Truth has been singularly and almost miraculously manifested in this district, under the sacred ministrations of the Rev. P. O’Foggarty, Catholic pastor, or, if you like it, rector of the parish. On Sunday last a venerable lady was received into the bosom of the Church with the usual ceremonies. The Bishop of Eliopolis preached an admirable sermon on this interesting occasion. The solemn choir service was under the direction of the talented Mr. Simpson, assisted by a large and extensive body of performers. The holy building was thronged with a fashionable and influential congregation, among whom were many Protestants of rank, who evinced deep sympathy and admiration.’ Then in the London papers you may put something of this kind :—‘ We understand that a late important conversion to the Catholic Church has caused the greatest sensation in a town not a hundred miles from Hawkstone. The lady in question is whispered to be of high rank and immense wealth, as well as the most unquestionable piety and talent. It is understood that her return to the true faith has been caused by her dissatisfaction with the secularity and false principles of the Protestant communion of England ; and that she will soon be followed by a large body of friends and dependants.’ In another paper you may put—‘ We are authorised to state that the lady of rank who has recently been made a convert to the Catholic Church at Hawkstone is not Lady ——. Her property has also been overrated. It by no means equals 30,000*l.* a-year. It is understood that the first

scruples were infused into her mind by reading, not the Tracts for the Times, and other works of the Oxford school, but some sermons of a celebrated vicar of a certain large manufacturing town, whose name begins with H and ends with k."

O'Foggarty could not help smiling. "And what is the good of this?" he asked.

Pearce regarded him with a sneer. "You who are to manage matters in my place," he said, — "you to ask the good of this! In the first place, does it not give to us importance and dignity, and the appearance of success? and success will soon find followers. Secondly, does it not encourage our friends? Thirdly, does it not terrify the Protestants, and especially the wild Protestants of Ireland? Fourthly, does it not drive them into more extravagance, and more violent abuse of all that we hold; and does not this expose them to make false statements, and thus to ridicule and refutation? And has any thing fed and supported us more than the follies of what they call Low Church and ultra-Protestantism? Fifthly, does it not dishearten those who are still lingering half-way, and prepare them to come over? Sixthly, does it not throw suspicion upon our worst and most dangerous enemies, if their principles are shown to be the cause of these conversions to us?"

"But why fix on Dr. H.?" asked O'Foggarty. "Why not on the Tracts for the Times?"

Pearce again smiled sarcastically. "Because," he replied, "those who put out the Tracts for the Times are now doing us effectual service; and the less said of them the better. We must throw suspicion only on those who are resolved to oppose us, of whom there is no hope, who will fight against us to the last. Once we thought this was to be the case with the tract writers; but now they have thrown off the mask, if they ever wore one, and are letting

their followers run straight forwards into our arms without a word to call them back, or with such a word as only encourages them to advance by showing how far they can go, and how near they may approach us, and yet not leave their own warm shelter: that is, how they may remain as Catholics, and serve the Pope, while they are members and even ministers of the English Church. If they had been ourselves, they could not have managed their plans more cleverly for us, or played more adroitly into our hands. No, let us say nothing of them."

"And you would not, then," said O'Foggarty, "recommend any controversy with these?"

"No," replied Pearce, "nor yet with the others. It is not safe. Development will not go down with these last, as it will with the young ones in Oxford. They explode it at once as mere rationalism; and it is not safe to appeal to the fathers. Even W. made a mistake when he got on this ground, and was sadly shown up for his quotations and references. It damaged us terribly. If you will have controversy, let it be with some hot-headed, zealous, Low-Churchman—that poor wretch Bentley, for instance, who knows nothing of history, and professes to fight with the Bible, and the Bible only, in his hand. You are sure of driving him into absurdities; for it must end in his either declaring that every one in the world, man, woman, or child, learned or ignorant, good or bad, is able to extract from the Bible by his own eyes the one truth which it contains, and has a right to judge the Bible by his own reason, which is just what all the infidels in the world contend for; and so he will preach infidelity—and this will pave the way for us; or else he must acknowledge the need of some authority to interpret and communicate the one truth—and he knows, and his people know, of none but ours: any other they

have suffered to be so long out of sight, that they fancy it does not exist."

"You are profound," said O'Foggarty — "much more profound than those would imagine who have only seen you in your red shock hair and your butcher's apron."

"I have my wits about me," replied Pearce, "otherwise those who sent me here would not have trusted me. And the advice which I have offered you is the best which you can have. But it is getting late, and my things must be packed. Did you take my place in the night coach?"

"Yes ; I said that Mrs. Rogers would be there, at the corner of the street, five minutes before starting. And, as it will be dark, you can muffle up your face for the toothach, and wrap up in this plaid cloak, and no one will see you."

"I have a pair of pattens," laughed Pearce, "and a cotton umbrella, and a black bonnet. I think I shall do — do," he continued, "better than you will. Be assured all their hopes are vain ; with all your cajoleries and softness, you will do nothing here with him. You may flatter him, but he will despise you ; you may make him suspected and abused for a Papist, as he will be called by all the Low-Churchmen round about, but this will not touch him ; he will remain firm as a rock, take my word for it, and will do you infinite mischief. He should be dealt with in a very different way." And Pearce, as he uttered the words, stammered and coughed ; and O'Foggarty looked grave and sombre, and shrunk back from his companion's touch.

"Ay, Mr. O'Foggarty," said Pearce, after a pause ; "when you read more of our books, you will be less sensitive and fastidious. If a good object is to be gained, we must not falter and stick at the means."

I think this is sound doctrine — our doctrine — is it not?”

But his companion remained silent. “You take the boy with you,” he then asked, “from London?”

“Yes,” replied Pearce. “He is safely lodged there with Connell; and I shall carry him abroad with me. Time will come round when I shall be wanted again here.”

“It is cruel, is it not,” said the other, “to take a boy from his father in this way?”

“Cruel!” exclaimed Pearce, “cruel!” and he ground his teeth. “They have allowed me — and if they had refused me — refused me this revenge — I would have rather ——”

But he checked himself, and drawing his chair close to O’Foggarty, who shrank back at his approach, “O’Foggarty,” he said, “do you know what revenge is? Did you ever taste it,—how sweet it is, how luscious?” And he looked into O’Foggarty’s eye with such a glare of malignity that the other drew back again from his companion in fear and horror.

“Tell them,” continued Pearce, “tell them that I will have my revenge. If I can have it by serving them, well and good: if not—tell them I defy them. I think,” he said more calmly, “they know me too well to trifle with me. If I obey them now and quit this place for a time, it is not to abandon my revenge, but to postpone it — to make it more sweet, more pungent. But if I am in their hands, they are also in mine, and they dare not disappoint me. You will let them know this, — I wish them to understand it.”

“I will tell them all which you wish to have told,” said O’Foggarty, rising and apparently de-

sirous of extricating himself from any longer conversation with so painful a companion. "I have business at this moment, and must leave you. I hope you will explain that I have done all in my power to assist you and make you comfortable."

"Yes," replied Pearce, sulkily; for though bound together by certain mysterious ties in the prosecution of one mysterious work, there was neither cordiality nor real confidence between them; and shaking hands coldly, they bade each other farewell. Two hours after, at the end of the lane, the heavy Highflyer coach stopped to take up Mrs. Rogers, who, wrapped up in a huge plaid cloak, and shrouded in a black bonnet and green veil, appeared with pattens in one hand and a cotton umbrella in another, anxiously superintending the disposition of a large holland-covered package on the top of the coach, and then, without saying a word, ensconced herself in a dark corner of the vehicle out of the glare of the lamps.

"You have not caught him yet?" said the coachman to a policeman who was standing by the door.

"Who?" asked the guard, familiarly.

"Why the fellow that used to walk about in the butcher's frock, with the red hair — the man who had to do with the riots — Peters — Pearce — what was his name?" The policeman shook his head, the guard took up his horn, and, to the sound of "Rule Britannia," the well-appointed, well-packed coach rolled off with a cheerful rumble over Hawkstone Bridge, and out of the town, on its way to London.

CHAPTER XIV.

WE may now pass, by means of that secret key which opens every lock, and which none but authors possess, into the back parlour of Mr. Lomax's counting-house. The reader will observe the front of the mansion itself, newly decorated with stucco mouldings and iron railings — the adjoining house converted into the office, to accommodate the expansion of so respectable and thriving a business. Within all is new — clerks, some pert and consequential, others grave and confidential, perched up on their lofty stools, with pens in their ears, behind new shining mahogany desks polished with French varnish; machines for weighing letters and sovereigns; subscription-books open on the counter; mysterious drawers, out of which astonished eyes see sovereigns ladled carelessly by handfuls, and bank-notes grasped by fifties and hundreds, just as if they were only silver paper — the whole a very mine of wealth. How many needy visitors trembled, as they pushed aside the green baize folding-doors, and faced the ministers of the sanctuary! How many with envious eyes exclaimed, as they issued into the street, — “O, that I were a banker!”

We pass through this outer room into another still larger and darker, with more clerks, more mahogany desks, more drawers full of sovereigns and bank-notes. Beyond is a veiled glass door, and we are ushered into the private parlour of the great country banker himself. Mr. Lomax is there, his

bald head shining on the other side of a green table ; his face not destitute of intelligence, but indented with lines of care ; his features neither coarse nor refined, neither vulgar nor gentlemanly — something between them both, — a specimen of the middle classes ; and his eye keenly scanning each person as he enters, as if to gauge the contents of his pocket, and the honesty of his promises. And yet, in some way or other, if that eye was met by another, it failed to stand the glance, and generally took refuge elsewhere. And Mr. Lomax was also subject to a nervousness — a little twitching of the mouth and hand. He had been subject to it for some time. The arrival of the post would bring it on — the sight of a strange face, sometimes even reading the newspaper. But it was only a trifle — scarcely to be named, as a drawback to his enviable and influential position in Hawkstone — as the monied man, to whom farmer and landlord, manufacturer and shopkeeper, were all obliged to resort in their respective difficulties — before whom all the little aristocracy of Hawkstone bowed down — whom even Lord Claremont had condescended to visit, preparatory to effecting a mortgage — whose notes passed current as those of the Bank of England — whose wife was the lady-patroness of the town — whose daughters the belles of its society, — whose very name, in the eyes of the multitude, was synonymous for credit and for wealth.

Mr. Lomax was not alone ; his table was surrounded by six or seven heads, among whom, as the newspapers word it, we distinguished the élite of the respectable professional inhabitants of the town, — Mr. Robertson, the late perennial mayor before the Reform Bill passed ; Mr. Atkinson, the solicitor ; Mr. Morgan, the surgeon ; Captain Hancock ; Mr. Brown, the great miller. And just as we enter,

Mr. Atkinson is in the act of shaking hands with Charles Bevan himself, whose presence seems to have caused in the whole group considerable surprise, but not a little satisfaction.

"I scarcely expected to see *you* here," said Mr. Morgan.

"Why not?" asked Bevan.

"Because I thought your new Oxford notions would not allow you to take any interest in politics."

"Really," answered Bevan, "I cannot profess to define what you mean by Oxford notions; but for myself, I think it one of the first duties of a clergyman to take a part in politics — not, I mean, in a mere struggle for place and power, which is too often called politics, but in the practical duties of a citizen. The state has given me a vote for a member of parliament, and I intend to exercise it, as I hope for the good of the country. I scarcely know circumstances in which the voice of the clergy may be so needed, and may do such good, as in a popular election."

The little party seemed rather unwilling to enter into the abstract discussion; and Bevan therefore took his chair, and prepared to listen while Mr. Atkinson drew up his thick ill-folded white neckcloth, and proceeded to open the business of the meeting.

Mr. Atkinson, the gentleman in the brown kerseymeré pantaloons and gaiters, in the black ill-made coat and waistcoat, with the long gold watch-chain dangling from his waistband, the grizzled hair, the grave, sallow, thoughtful, and reserved countenance, which, however, when called on, as he constantly was called, to direct the politics of Hawkstone, assumed even a degree of elevation and warmth, and exhibited considerable tact and self-command, and knowledge of the world, — Mr. At-

kinson, as must be known to any one who has been within a hundred miles of Hawkstone, was a first-rate country solicitor, a man of unquestionable probity, of singular influence, looked up to by all his clients with a mixture of awe and regard, one who strictly fulfilled the duties of his position, an attentive husband, a father who worked hard to provide for his ten children, a staunch supporter of the Church, a man of irreproachable character, and the most important member of the Conservative party in Hawkstone. And, by his advice, the leaders of the same Conservative party were now assembled in Mr. Lomax's back parlour, to see what could be done at the last moment (for Conservatives usually wait till the last moment) to arrest the fearful progress of events, which threatened to install Mr. Marmaduke Brook, the radical, in the chair of the member for Hawkstone, by the hands of Mrs. Maddox and a host of dissenting allies.

Their anxiety had been not a little increased by the late events in the Forest, and by the alarm which had been caused by the revelations to which it had given rise. They felt like men who were sitting on a barrel of gunpowder, knowing that a match was burning near it, but unable to discover where. "In such times," said Mr. Lomax, "it became every one who valued the peace of society, and that which is the object of society—the preservation of property and credit, to come forward boldly, and stand by the institutions of his country." And the obvious step in the power of the Conservatives of Hawkstone was to procure the return of a Conservative member for the borough on the present occasion.

It must be confessed their means were not ample, nor their cause hopeful. Hawkstone, before the Reform Bill, had been a notorious borough—noto-

rious for the silence, ease, and certainty with which any two gentlemen recommended to the worthy electors, that is, to the mayor and corporation, by the government for the time being, were sure of conforming themselves in a wonderful way to the sympathies and tastes of all the electors, and of obtaining their unanimous suffrages without even asking for them personally. It was notorious also for the excellent turbot and delicious venison which smoked on the mayor's table twice or thrice a year, and on General Villiers's as often as he chose to put himself to the trouble of entertaining, at the Priory, his accommodating friends and neighbours, and of suggesting to them that Sir William Booth, the Secretary to the Admiralty, and the Honourable Mr. Murphy, the new Lord of the Treasury, would be fit and proper representatives for the borough of Hawkstone. It was notorious also for the singular facility with which nephews, and cousins, and brothers, and brothers-in-law of the corporate body of Hawkstone obtained various official situations, as tide-waiters, clerks, custom-house officers, and the like. And General Villiers's banking account also exhibited about once in every three or four years, synchronising with the dissolution of parliament,—a large, mysterious, but very acceptable item, which to the steward of the General's estates must have seemed to have dropped from the clouds.

These, as old Dr. Grant, the paralytic rector, used mournfully to say, were the good old times—the times of peace and order, before the torrent of innovation had begun to menace and sweep away the throne and the altar, and when Hawkstone lay in blessed repose under the shade of its ancient institutions. It must, indeed, be confessed, that, however favourable this shade had been to the physical growth of the members of the corporation,

and to the pecuniary growth of General Villiers's balance at his banker's, other things had also sprung up and flourished under it, which even the corporation themselves could not but regard as troublesome fungi. Nor had the altar, typified by the old grey church, or the throne, symbolised by the mayor's gilt mace, and the constable's brass-knobbed staff of office, escaped something of decay. Dr. Grant himself, who had been placed in his post of rector of the parish as the firm and trustworthy friend of the Villiers family—as the man whose opinion in all political matters, and especially in the exercise of the elective franchise, corresponded with the most undeviating punctuality with the opinions of the General—Dr. Grant continued, year after year, to preach his well-arranged cycle of compilations from Blair; to diminish gradually the number of services, which he found himself unable to perform without a curate; to celebrate marriages, and funerals, and baptisms with all decent regularity; to visit the sick when he was sent for, and the school on the day of examination; and to give away his pounds of roast beef at Christmas, and his subscriptions to all ordinary charities, with most decent regularity. But meanwhile, pew after pew, however comfortably arranged, lined with green or red, padded with cushions, curtained from observation, fell each Sunday into a state of emptiness. One after another families dropped off from their attendance, and others sprang up who never had attended; and Dr. Grant was wonder-struck, and provoked, and exasperated, as he passed by the new streets in the suburbs, to see bricklayers, with the most irritating assiduity, engaged in raising convenient, neat-sashed, slate-roofed, galleried, gas-lighted structures, and decorating them with two round pillars at the door, and a portentous inscrip-

tion on the pediment,— Wesleyan Chapel—Independent Chapel—Baptist Chapel—Presbyterian Meeting-House—Quakers' Meeting—The Bible Church—Church of the Rational Religionists—New Free Church of Scotland—New Episcopal Church of England (which when Dr. Grant came to inquire, he found meant an episcopal church which had nothing to do with bishops),—not to mention the Unitarians, Socinians, Mormonites, besides various off-shoots of Wesleyans, who still professed allegiance to the Church, and attachment to its system, only they protested against taking part in its services or obeying its ministers.

And with these weeds, others had sprung up round the same new buildings, which disturbed the peace of old Mr. Robertson, the incapacitated perennial mayor, full as much as the new chapels discomfited Dr. Grant, the paralytic rector. A newspaper was established at Hawkstone—a newspaper, cleverly written, full of sharpness, not ill-informed, but which, to Mr. Robertson's great surprise, instead of undertaking the defence of the throne and the altar, and eulogising the ancient institutions of the town, under the motto of "Things as they are," adopted, to the infinite disgust of the corporation, a totally different course. One week came a complaint against the town-clerk's fees; another brought a remonstrance against the paving and lighting tax; then came a sneer at the head-constable; then actually an attack upon the mayor; then words were bandied about of corruption, bribery, truckling, sycophancy, roguery,—all aimed at the mayor and corporation. Then followed a denunciation of church-rates; then a call to a public meeting; then petitions for reform; then large assemblages of the non-electors of Hawkstone in the great room at the Bell, with speeches, and pam-

phlets, and placards. At last three or four of the most influential of the malcontents, including two dissenting ministers, and Mr. Smith, the manufacturer, a recent arrival, were seen one fine morning in a mysterious group on the outside of the High-flyer coach, hastening up to London; and, to the mayor and corporation's surprise and consternation, not unmixed with anger and contempt, their names appeared the next day in the newspapers as important delegates from the borough of Hawkstone, who had met to consult with other oppressed individuals in other boroughs similarly situated, by what means they might be relieved from their disgraceful thralldom, as a borough-ridden, and corruption-haunted people. These were but the mutterings of the storm—the first big drops of the thunder-shower. At last the cloud burst over the devoted heads of the mayor and corporation, and the Reform Bill fell upon them like a thunder-bolt.

From the dismay and prostration which this blow had inflicted on them, the Tory party of Hawkstone—a few and scattered minority—was just beginning to recover; and Mr. Atkinson was at their head. But Tories they dared call themselves no longer. Was it conscience? Was it fear? Was it that an alias was necessary to escape from the memory of past peccadillos? Had they really become enlightened to the antiquated character of their former principles? Or had they in truth even before had no principles at all—nothing but the name of Tory, to denote that portion of the constituency who partook of General Villiers's annual hospitality? Whatever was the cause, the name of Tory was discreetly merged and sunk in the new-coined title of Conservative. What the precise nature of Conservatism was, no one pro-

fessed to define. When old Mr. Robinson was charged with being a Tory, he anxiously repudiated the accusation. When he was taxed with Liberalism, he writhed his mouth in disgust. When asked what he was, he could only say that he was something betwixt and between—neither one nor the other. "*Medio tutissimus ibis*" was his motto. He trusted to Mr. Atkinson; and Mr. Atkinson, though he did not think it worth while to develope his whole sentiments or policy to his party, partly because they would probably rebel, and partly because he thought they had not wit to understand him, and must consent to follow him blindfold, or fall a victim to the enemy, cherished his theory in secret, having borrowed it from high sources, and confirmed it by due meditation on his practical experience of life.

Mr. Atkinson prided himself on being an honest man; and although so long as a dishonest system had been firmly established under the good old days, he had not thought it necessary either to remonstrate against or alter it, now that the corruption had been openly denounced and overturned, he felt that it had been wrong, and not easily defensible. He therefore resolved at once, nobly and generously, to give up what it was impossible that he could any longer retain, and submitted, with a smiling face and conciliating submission, to the transfer of the empire of Hawkstone from the mayor and corporation to the ten-pound freeholders. Nor was he content with submission. He actually professed readiness to co-operate with the new system; and even went beyond the authors of the change, who had endeavoured to beguile their opponents by declaring that it was no change at all, only an expansion of existing institutions; and himself announced that it was a change, a total alteration, a

transfer of supreme power from the king to the people; and that though the constitution was destroyed by it, he would henceforth willingly acquiesce in it, and proceed to carry out the new principles to their full extent, though with due caution and slowness. The poor ex-mayor looked on him with alarm; Captain Hancock, who still remained a Tory, shrugged his shoulders; Charles Bevan gave him up in despair. But Mr. Smith, the manufacturer, shook hands most amicably with his former foe; and the dissenting ministers even toasted his health, and smiled significantly among themselves, when Mr. Atkinson endeavoured to infuse into the still-reluctant members of the corporation his own newly-developed liberality. They accepted, not indeed very gratefully or courteously, but as instalments, the many little pieces of patronage and privileges, which Mr. Atkinson blandly placed at their disposal in the town, sometimes without consulting the mayor, to whom they properly belonged. Peace was Mr. Atkinson's object. "The popular current," he said, "could not be resisted. There was a law of fatality in boroughs as in empires, by which they must slide by degrees from monarchies into democracies; and it was the part of the wise and prudent statesman not to provoke opposition by resistance, but to accommodate himself to the stream—happy only, if he could prevent the ancient institutions from being pulled down in a riot, by undertaking to remove them himself, trowel in hand, brick by brick, and beam by beam." In this gradual and slow removal Mr. Atkinson was now busily engaged. Why the ancient institutions should be allowed to stand—why it might be the wisdom and duty of a statesman even to risk a battle in their defence, he had never thought. They were obnoxious to public opinion;

and public opinion was his only test of truth. And as fame, popular fame—the fame of being an admirable town-clerk of Hawkstone, of managing its parties adroitly so as to prevent collision, of improving its finances, and reducing its debt,—was the darling object of the practical solicitor's ambition, he looked only to the increase of his reputation with the councillors of the north ward, or the majority of liberal aldermen, and rejoiced in obtaining the reluctant and even sneering applause of the radical newspapers, who congratulated him on his enlightened views, or condescendingly contrasted his enlarged policy with the dull bigotry of his ignorant predecessors.

And yet, if Mr. Atkinson had been called a Radical, he would have repelled the charge with indignation. He was a friend to the Church, because, as he delighted to say, its doctrines appeared to him very true, neither fanatical nor popish, and more calculated than any other to produce obedient and honest citizens, who would make the nation wealthy and prosperous by their quietness and sobriety. At the same time he would not for the world prevent others from holding their own opinions. And other forms and doctrines might be true as well as those of the Church. And toleration of each other's views was the fittest course for the practical statesman to take. He therefore not only paid his annual subscription to Dr. Grant's evening lecture, but contributed his guinea a year to the Wesleyan school, induced one of his clients to give a very favourable piece of ground for the erection of a Unitarian meeting-house, and had held a plate at a meeting in the town-hall for promoting a Baptist mission to New Zealand, at the same time that the bishop of that country was embarking to take possession of his diocese. He was a friend to the throne ;

but yet he was almost struck dumb, when Charles Bevan ventured to refuse drinking the "Glorious Revolution of 1688." And whenever Charles I. was mentioned, Mr. Atkinson confessed that much good had arisen from the principle then established, that in cases of tyranny a people might right themselves. His notion of society was, that it was a very convenient association for the purpose of procuring comfortable houses, decent clothes, abundant provisions. And his abhorrence of radicalism mainly resolved itself into the pernicious influence, which sedition, and rebellion, and agitation generally exercised on the price of stocks. In his heart, indeed, he little approved of a very extended education of the poor; for he found that the impertinent boys at the Hawkstone National School paid little attention to taking off their hats to him; and Mr. Smith, the manufacturer, complained bitterly that his educated factory men, instead of devoting themselves to develop the resources of the country by persevering labour for sixteen hours a-day, were prone to read newspapers, and congregate in debating societies. But education was a popular watchword, and therefore Mr. Atkinson surrendered himself to the charm, and even delivered an address to the Mechanics' Institute, of which he was treasurer; in which address he satisfactorily showed that nothing could more conduce to the virtue, chastity, and honesty of the poor than teaching them the use of the globes; that the greatest enjoyment after sixteen hours' work was to listen to a new theory of geology; and that, indeed, man's highest happiness on earth, and probably in heaven, must consist in being able to anatomise an ichthyosaurus, give the right name to the ornithorhynchus paradoxus, or discover a new nebula under the extreme point of the last star in Orion's belt.

But we must not detain our readers longer from the conclave in Mr. Lomax's back parlour; for after a great deal of discussion, in which all the parties spoke together at once till they were tired, and Charles Bevan, who had sat a silent spectator, was about to take up his hat and retire in despair, Mr. Atkinson, who possessed singular tact in managing a public meeting, and that he might carry his own way last, always allowed the others to have their own way first, and to talk themselves out of breath and patience, proceeded to draw a written paper out of his pocket, and suggested that he might be allowed to read it.

"I think," he said, "gentlemen, that we are all agreed in asking Mr. Villiers to come forward on the Conservative interest." Certainly, was the general exclamation. "And that he must be asked to take an enlarged and liberal line, otherwise we shall lose the support of a great number of votes." There was a reluctant murmur of assent from a few, broken by a growled "humph!" from Captain Hancock, who sat, with his rough, honest, weather-beaten face leaning on his gold cane, in one corner.

"I have thought the best thing I could do," said Mr. Atkinson, "was to draw up a little address, which he would himself circulate to the electors, and this would explain our views better to him than any thing else." Captain Hancock again muttered "pish!" but the rest nodded assent. "Shall I read it, gentlemen?" asked Mr. Atkinson, blandly.

"By all means," said the little party. And even Charles Bevan resumed his seat, it must be confessed, not wholly to the satisfaction of the composer of the address, for Charles was rather hypercritical; and not many months before, after Mr. Atkinson had taken the greatest pains in elaborating an address to Sir Robert Peel, and had concluded

with saluting him, not only as the greatest statesman that ever lived, but as the hope of the Church, and the "pater patriæ," Charles had poured upon his eulogy such a storm of indignation and ridicule, that the favourite phrase was obliged to be expunged, and the panegyric confined to the two points of establishing the new police, and reducing the Three and a half per cents; beyond which, to the astonishment and indignation of Mr. Atkinson, Charles declared that no one act of the minister would obtain from posterity, who saw the consequences of his policy, any thing but contempt and indignation. Mr. Atkinson, however, was now obliged to proceed, though not without having before his eyes the fear both of Captain Hancock's blunt honest "pish!" and Charles Bevan's more subtle sarcasm.

And he began his address accordingly. "'To the Loyal and Independent Electors of the Borough of Hawkstone.'" Thus far he hugged himself with the thought that no possible objection could be raised. But he was somewhat taken by surprise by the dreaded "humph!" from Captain Hancock's corner. Mr. Atkinson looked up in meek surprise and expostulation. "What possible objection," he asked, gently, "could be made to this, the usual and ordinary form of addressing all bodies of electors?"

"They are not loyal," growled the captain, "and they ought not to be independent. Why do you begin by a lie?"

"Not loyal!" exclaimed Mr. Atkinson. "The Conservatives not loyal!"

"No," answered the captain, "there is not one of them would die for their queen; and that is what I call loyal. Has not your own Sir Robert Peel told the House of Commons that it is for them, and

not for the king, to choose the king's ministers? And do you call this loyal?"

"My good friend," interposed Mr. Atkinson, "you should consider the signs of the times. This is not a day when the extreme prerogatives of the crown can be maintained. We must soften down asperities—we must conciliate. Think of the general enlightenment—of the extension of newspapers—of the ——"

But before the sentence could be concluded the Captain had thrown himself back in his chair. And Charles Bevan added: "And of the National Schools—and the mechanics' institutes—and the railways—and the steam navigation; all of which clearly prove that it is right that this empire should be governed by the people, and not by their king. Is it not so, Mr. Atkinson?"

Mr. Atkinson bit his lips, but still endeavoured to preserve his bland, conciliating smile. "And I suppose," he added, at length, "you would object to the word 'independent.' Your new Oxford notions," he added, "Mr. Bevan, are not very favourable to liberty."

Bevan, however, made no reply, except to beg him to proceed. And Mr. Atkinson resumed:

"'Invited, as I have been, by a numerous and influential body of the ——'" But here the Captain could not help knocking his gold-headed cane upon the ground. "Ay," he exclaimed, "what is the meaning of 'influential body,' and 'independent electors?' are they to be influenced, or independent? Which do you mean, Mr. Atkinson?"

"I mean, of course," explained Mr. Atkinson, "that they should give their votes freely, without being guided by any thing which I, or you, or any other person might say to them. Now the Reform Bill has been passed, my opinion is that we should

all accept it willingly, and endeavour to carry out its principles. And one of these, surely, is that the voters are to vote independently."

"And what, then, becomes of your influence?" said the Captain, rather indignantly.

"Of course," said Mr. Atkinson, "I should be very far from excluding the proper influence of property: property is the very end and foundation of society."

"Or of knowledge?" said Bevan.

"Certainly," replied Mr. Atkinson.

"Or of goodness?" continued Bevan.

"Surely," conceded Mr. Atkinson.

"Then," concluded Bevan, "if they are to be under all these influences, perhaps we may as well strike out the word 'independent' in the heading of the address."

"Will Mr. Lomax have the goodness to put it to the vote?"

"I move," continued the Captain, "that 'loyal' be struck out with it; for I hate telling the poor ignorant people a lie. They will learn by-and-by to think cutting their queen's throat a loyalty."

The majority, however, felt no such scruples; and accepting the epithets as parts of an ordinary form, meaning nothing, they overruled both objections, and Mr. Atkinson continued.

"Invited, as I have been, by a numerous and influential body of the electors of the borough of Hawkstone to offer myself as a candidate for the honour of representing it in parliament——"

But once more the reader was interrupted by a grumbled "humph!" and Mr. Atkinson's eyes were lifted up to the dreaded corner.

"I do not like that 'offer myself as a candidate,'" muttered Captain Hancock. "It is we who ought to ask him to accept it, not he who should come

and ask us to give it him. What does he get by it?"

"Get by it!" exclaimed Mr. Atkinson, rather faintly (for reminiscences came across him, which turned the sensitive, liberalized blood, which he had lately imbibed, into a faint blush upon his cheeks). "Of course it is a great honour to him, and a great advantage, and a great ——" But he found a difficulty in finishing his sentence.

"What!" continued Captain Hancock, "to be kept all the best part of the year in a nasty town, swallowing night after night infamous air, and still more infamous speeches — obliged to give up his family and society — and to make himself sick with committees, and divisions, and debates — and all for the satisfaction of being called the honourable member for Hawkstone. Pish! I'll never give my vote to a man who comes and asks me to give it him, as if he were going to get a place or a pension by his membership. And as for the honour! — why what is the honour of being the chosen of a mob — the elect of the ten-pound freeholders — the pet and favourite of a set of fellows, who know nothing, and care for nothing, but getting their beer a penny a pot cheaper, or their wages without any labour, and who only send him to parliament to obtain this for them."

Once more, however, the objection fell upon the audience without meeting any sympathy; and Mr. Atkinson continued: "'I come forward without delay to respond to their summons.'"

"You might as well say 'answer,' instead of 'respond,'" criticised the Captain. But the rest, who knew little of their classics, except what they had picked up at very third-rate schools, preferred the Latinised word; it sounded more dignified.

"My principles," continued the reader, "are

well known to be those of the present Conservative ministry.’”

“What principles are those?” grumbled Captain Hancock.

“Oh!” said Charles Bevan, “of course the principle of having no principles.” And Captain Hancock nodded to him with approbation.

“‘I pledge myself,’” continued Mr. Atkinson, “‘to endeavour to maintain the ancient institutions of the country, which it is the object of a Conservative government to preserve.’”

“Had you not better specify them?” asked Bevan; “the cathedral bodies, for instance; the Irish Bishoprics; the municipal corporations; the spiritual independence of the Church; Church education; Convocation; the Bishopric of Bangor, with a few others?”

Mr. Atkinson looked at him impatiently, but resumed. “‘But I shall be most anxious to remove any restraints which now exclude certain portions of the community from sharing the full benefits of the constitution.’”

“That is,” said the Captain, “you will keep the gates of the citadel locked and bolted, and only break a hole in the wall for the enemy to creep in at the side.”

“Your metaphor, Captain, is rather obscure,” observed Mr. Atkinson, as he endeavoured to parry the objection with another smile; “but we must hasten on. ‘I desire to see the agricultural interest preserved in its just rights; and, at the same time, all unnecessary burdens removed from the manufactures of the country.’ I inserted this,” said Mr. Atkinson, “because I rather think Mr. Burn, at the silk-mills, is inclined to give us his vote, if our candidate will support free trade;” and he looked round for some marks of admiration at his sagacity. “Mr. Bowler, and the other landlords, of course are with

us; but I think we must contrive to conciliate the manufacturers."

"Certainly," said Charles Bevan. "And it is so easy to do this, by making promises which no one could ever convict you of breaking. 'Just rights!' — 'unnecessary burdens!' — Of course we must all agree in this. Pray what are the 'just rights' of the agriculturist, and the 'necessary burdens' of the manufacturer?"

"Indeed, Mr. Bevan," replied Mr. Atkinson, rather angrily, "I cannot enter into abstract discussions with you. I must deprecate the introduction of theories and speculations into plain practical politics. I think it would be most dangerous for us to commit ourselves to any general principles, instead of waiting for circumstances, and guiding ourselves by them."

"Like a weathercock waiting for a wind!" grumbled Captain Hancock.

"Captain Hancock, I must protest," said Mr. Atkinson, "against such severe strictures. Will you allow me to proceed? 'I am, from conscientious conviction, a firm friend to the Established Church; but I shall always be found ready to give full freedom and toleration to other forms of opinion, all of which, if conscientiously maintained, are equally acceptable to the Almighty, and between which we cannot judge without assuming an infallibility impossible to man.'"

But here he was interrupted by Charles Bevan, whose countenance had assumed a very grave expression of indignation. He took a small Bible out of his pocket, and presenting it to Mr. Atkinson, begged to know in what page of it he found any principle of the kind.

"Indeed," said Mr. Atkinson, "I am no theologian, and really cannot enter into your Oxford

notions. I am very willing to support the Church, but I cannot compromise the peace of the country, and condemn others for the sake of maintaining your exclusive notions. It may be all very well for theologians ; but as practical men of business, who have to engage in the affairs of the world, we really must make allowances for differences of opinions, and not involve ourselves in a war of words for the peculiar doctrines of one class in preference to another."

"That is," replied Bevan, "as practical men of business, and as politicians, you must cast away your obligations as Christians, deny your faith, defy your God, and in the very teeth of his commandments apologise for, and support, and propagate, every form of heresy and schism."

"Indeed," exclaimed Mr. Atkinson, rather alarmed by the severity of the words, "nothing can be farther from my intention. I am sure Dr. Grant will tell you that no man is more a friend to the Church than myself, or more anxious to support it. Have I not given 10*l.* to the new organ?"

"The Church," replied Bevan, sternly, "does not want friends but sons. It demands not support, but obedience: and it has no more dangerous enemies than those who profess to assist it, almost contemptuously pitying its weakness, instead of recognising and submitting to its authority."

"But indeed," continued Mr. Atkinson, "I have no wish to undervalue its authority. And yet, really you would not have me as a layman trouble myself about its thirty-nine Articles, or enter into all its controversies with other sects?"

"I should wish you," replied Bevan, "as a Christian, to trouble yourself with ascertaining the grounds of your faith, and learning what that Church is, of which you profess to be a member ;

and then amongst other things you would learn never to apply to it the name of sect."

"Ay!" said Mr. Atkinson; "Catholics always argue in the same manner."

"I presume, Mr. Atkinson," replied Bevan, "that you mean Roman Catholics or Romanists. I beg to assure you that they argue in a very different manner. But this is not the place for such a discussion. May I beg you to erase from your address all that you have said about the Church?"

"Erase! erase!" exclaimed Mr. Atkinson. "Surely you would not wish me to leave out the passage about supporting the Church? What will Dr. Grant say?"

"And what will the Dissenters say," added Mr. Lomax, "if there is nothing in the address about toleration and liberty of conscience? They will charge us with being bigoted and I know not what."

"I think I might add," replied Bevan, "what will Mr. Villiers say, if you propose to put into his mouth any sentiments like those which you have inserted?"

"But indeed," remonstrated Mr. Atkinson, "these are not days, when we can return to those old exploded maxims about Church authority and exclusive truth. We must adopt larger views, or we shall never be able to stem the torrent of popular opinion."

"I suppose you mean," subjoined Captain Hancock, gruffly, "not be able to swim down with it quietly and comfortably, for I do not see many signs of stemming it."

"I must insist," repeated Bevan, "on the erasure of those words, or I must refuse my vote at once. If I were defending my title to an estate, I should not like to trust an advocate, who rested my title

on his own personal regard for me, and on his own opinion that I was a fit person to possess it, instead of exhibiting my title-deeds, and proving that it was mine by a right independent of all his own inclinations and opinions. And as a minister of the Church, I cannot permit its title, as the dispenser of the one truth, and as the ambassador of Heaven, to be perilled by resting the support of it upon any other grounds than an external commission from above, and thus recognising in it a power which we are not to panegyryze but to obey."

"Well," replied Mr. Atkinson, "I am sure I am most anxious to conciliate every one. If you wish it, and no one objects, I will cut out the sentence. And indeed these Church matters are extremely perplexing, and I wish we were well rid of them. I should like, you know, to express the feelings of Conservatives, that the Establishment must be supported; but if you are not content with this, and require more, perhaps the best way is to omit it altogether."

"By far the best way," replied Bevan. "The Church will be far safer without than with such help as you propose to give it." And Bevan looked at his watch, and, remembering that he had an engagement, he took up his hat and left the room.

"A very singular young man!" whispered Mr. Lomax to his neighbour.—"Very odd opinions those new Oxford doctrines," muttered Mr. Robertson.—"What a troublesome person to deal with," exclaimed Mr. Atkinson, looking round more freely, and now that Bevan was gone, caring less for the growlings of Captain Hancock in the corner. But Captain Hancock still further relieved his mind by taking up his hat also, and preparing to depart. He stopped, however, to button his great coat, and to disburthen his mind of a few words.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “and you, Mr. Atkinson,—you’ll excuse a plain, blunt, rough man for speaking his mind to you. But I’ll venture to tell you, that in the way you are going on now, you will neither get Mr. Villiers to be your member, nor find any one worth having to help and support you. Englishmen understand trickery and shuffling. And bad as they may be, and worse since the Reform Bill than they were before, they will not have anything to say for any long time, except to honest, straightforward persons. When you know your own minds, and can tell your own principles, and will hold your own course without being frightened at this, and driven back at that, or trying to conciliate here and compromise there, and always leaving a hole to shuffle out at from every engagement you make, then, perhaps, you may be able to return a member for Hawkstone. But I think you had better begin by dropping your new nick-name, and returning at once to your old Tory, who was at least an honest man, and dared say what he thought, and do what he knew was right. I hate conservatism, gentlemen, and so do all sound-hearted Englishmen, as they hate a coward and a traitor. I beg to wish you a good morning.”

And the blunt-spoken Captain closed the door after him, leaving the little conclave partly indignant, and partly ashamed, and even the prudent, practical, cautious Mr. Atkinson, with all his skill and tact, crest-fallen and alarmed, and scarcely able to conclude the remainder of his address, which, like the beginning, was made up of a well adjusted balance of promises and professions—holding out a hook baited for each party, and which the acute contriver congratulated himself on having happily concealed under an enticing compound of liberalism and conservatism ; taking care, as he boasted to his

hearers, not to commit them irrevocably to any thing whatever, and leaving a door open to escape, at any pressure of circumstances, from any engagement they might make.

The reader will scarcely be interested in hearing more of their deliberations. But it may be as well to subjoin the answer, which Villiers returned to the deputation, who waited on him with a request from the party, that he would come forward as a candidate for the borough, and issue in his own name, as best corresponding with the sentiments of the electors, Mr. Atkinson's well-concocted address.

“GENTLEMEN,

“I BEG you will accept my thanks for the compliment which you have paid me. I am aware that my connection with the borough of Hawkstone would naturally give you a right to claim of me that I should undertake the duty of representing it in parliament: but, by the address which you have placed in my hands, you imply that I must enter parliament as the representative of the opinions of my constituents, and not as a senator chosen by them to deliberate, in their stead, upon the interests of the whole nation. And as such a theory, however generally adopted in the present day, is subversive of the British monarchy and constitution, I must decline to comply with it. I will also candidly confess that my principles will not allow me to adopt the tone of conciliation and comprehension, which, it would appear, is necessary to secure the votes of any large portion of the constituency. I cannot offer at once protection to the agriculturist, and a repeal of the corn laws to the manufacturer. I cannot profess adherence to the Church, and at the same time regard dissent with indifference or favour. I cannot at once promise

to maintain the Irish Church, and to enlarge and give endowments and grants to its deadly enemies. I cannot uphold with one hand the British monarchy, and with the other the supremacy and irresponsibility to law of the House of Commons. In other words, I cannot profess incompatibilities and contradictions ; and therefore I must beg to decline allowing my name to be proposed as a representative for the borough of Hawkstone.

“ I have the honour to be, gentlemen,

“ Your obedient, faithful servant,

“ ERNEST VILLIERS.”

CHAPTER XV.

It was two days after the meeting of the Conservative conclave that Mr. Lomax was sitting in the same back parlour of the banking-house—his head resting upon his hands, and his brow furrowed with deep thought. And yet, though his eye was full of anxiety, a little conscious smile of self-congratulation could not but play at times upon his cold colourless lips. Before him lay the newspaper of the day, its columns full of a most eloquent and encouraging speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the flourishing state of the country. Shipping multiplied—commerce extending—customs and excise increased—public credit supported—money abundant—manufactures flourishing—interest reduced—plentiful harvest—imports decreasing—exports increasing;—no picture of wealth and prosperity could exceed in brilliancy of colour the statistics of the newly opened budget. It was an illuminated ledger; and the hearts of Englishmen throbbed with exultation as they read—and not a few thought of the words of the Psalmist: “Barns full of all manner of treasure, and sheep bringing forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets.” And they blessed the people that were in such a case, forgetting of whom the words are uttered—the “strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.”—Ps. cxliv.

Among the exulting readers, not the least were the inhabitants of Hawkstone. Hawkstone had

been specially mentioned in the speech as a place which had been foremost in the career of improvement. Ten years since there had not been a manufacture in the town : now factory upon factory was rising. Ten years since it took two days to travel from it to London : now a railway was almost completed, which would bring the journey within a few hours. Whole streets were springing up in the suburbs ; new capitalists speculating in its shops. It was lighted with gas, paved with granite, guarded by a new police, decorated with a theatre, enlightened by a museum. Nothing could be more prosperous or thriving.

And yet, as Mr. Lomax read the panegyric, a little bitterness mixed with his smile, and he laid down the paper upon a statement of figures, with which he had just been busied, and which he seemed unwilling to face again. He turned to another paper lying open before him : it was Villiers's answer to the requisition, which Mr. Atkinson had just left with him, after a long and confidential communication. And Mr. Lomax's face assumed the cast of Hamlet deliberating on "To be, or not to be?" when a gentle tap was heard at the door ; and Mr. Lomax started up with a vexed and timid expression of countenance, for he knew what that tap augured.

It was Mrs. Lomax. And, with an ill-disguised awkwardness and reluctance, she was come, as she often did come, even into the penetralia of the banking-house, to request a cheque.

"My dear, you are always pestering me for money!" was the greeting with which she was received. "I am a ruined man, and you know it ; and yet I cannot induce you to be economical."

"My love," replied the lady, "it is impossible to keep up our establishment without money ; and

you have often told me that you wished us to make a proper appearance. I only want thirty pounds."

"Thirty pounds," exclaimed Mr. Lomax, whose drawers were at that moment piled with magical bank-notes—into whose iron room, only the evening before, Mrs. Lomax had persuaded him to take her niece Martha, that she might see sovereigns tossed about in shovels. "Thirty pounds! I tell you, my love, I have not got it; and you must do without. Let the bills stand over."

"Not got it!" replied Mrs. Lomax, with a laugh. "How can you talk such nonsense, when you have thousands in those very drawers?" And Mrs. Lomax playfully endeavoured to open one of them; but her husband seized her arm rather roughly, and bade her sit down. "I tell you what, Maria," he said "I cannot go on in this way any longer. I do not choose to let the world know—but you must know—that each year is involving me more and more in difficulties; and if I were to die to-morrow, you and the children would be penniless. You must alter your way of living."

Mrs. Lomax seemed for a time dismayed by the bitterness of her husband's manner, and the evident sincerity of his words. But she consoled herself with thinking that he had often said the same thing before, and had the next day fallen readily into any proposal which she might suggest for making an alteration in the house, or giving a dinner to some of the neighbouring gentry, or providing new ball-dresses for her daughters, that they might maintain their station as the leading belles of Hawkstone. And as Mrs. Lomax was unable to reconcile the inconsistencies, she preferred adopting the explanation most agreeable to her own wishes, and satisfied herself with the conviction that her husband's complaints were only a false cry of wolf, caused by

a failure in some little speculation, or perhaps by having partaken too freely of some recent hospitalities. "The stomach," she said to herself, "was out of order; and this was enough to account for those idle fancies and depressions of spirits. A blue pill would set it all to rights." And accordingly, whenever in their private colloquies at night, Mr. Lomax touched with anxiety upon the dreaded subject of retrenchment, Mrs. Lomax assured him that it was all bile, and had recourse to her medicine-chest as the best panacea for these financial indigestions. Now, however, Mr. Lomax's gloomy brow, and the sight of open letters before him, excited in his lady's mind some deeper misgivings. "Is any thing the matter, really?" she said.

"Yes," he replied, fiercely; "every thing is the matter. I am a beggar, Maria, and you are a beggar, and the children are beggars!" And he put into her hand a letter which he had just received, and from which Mrs. Lomax, though little initiated in business, understood that her husband had just been a considerable loser by the very rise in the funds on which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had so warmly congratulated the country.

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Lomax, after folding up and returning the letter, "this is a loss, certainly; but it is only 800*l*. Surely that cannot have ruined you! And another speculation will set it all right."

"It is not one," said Mr. Lomax, bitterly. "They have all failed, again and again; and I tell you I am a ruined man. We must sell the carriage."

"My dear," replied the lady, "you are taking things too much to heart. You must not despair, as you are so inclined to do. Besides, the carriage is but a trifle; and what would the world say if they saw you reducing your establishment. They

would think immediately that there was something the matter; and you could not answer for the consequences."

"I do not care about consequences," said Mr. Lomax, impatiently. "You must give up the carriage and the horses, and let the girls know that they cannot go to Brighton this year. And then your servants, Maria — I tell you fairly, you must get rid of John, and you must part with your page, as you call him; and the cook's wages must be reduced. I never can support such an establishment."

"My dear," replied Mrs. Lomax, whose theory of domestic management was to soften, not to oppose, and who in exercising her empire over her husband, had adopted the motto "*imperare parendo*," "of course, whatever you desire must be done. But you would not wish to do this all at once. Consider how many persons there are who would seize upon it, and spread all kinds of reports. Why you might have a run upon the bank tomorrow."

"And so much the better," exclaimed Mr. Lomax, angrily. "Better to have it all over at once than go on in this way, dreading every post, and begging and borrowing" (he stopped, and did not add 'stealing') "in every corner to save the crash from coming."

"But I thought," said Mrs. Lomax, with some dismay, "that there was not a more flourishing business than yours all over the country. Surely the public believe so; and they must be the best judges."

"Best judges!" exclaimed Mr. Lomax, bitterly. "What do they know of our losses by bad debts and failures in speculations? And now, when money is so plentiful, how are we to make any thing

by our deposits? People think that bankers are as rich as Cræsus, because they have thousands in their hands: but if the money is not their own, Mrs. Lomax?"

"Not their own!" said Mrs. Lomax, soothingly. "But it is placed in their hands to be made use of: and surely you are at liberty to employ it as you like, and to replace it when convenient? Why this is the very nature of credit."

"The very nature of a system," replied the gentleman, angrily, "for leading people into debt, and when they are in debt turning them into rogues."

"Why will you talk so wildly, my love?" said Mrs. Lomax. "Surely you are not in debt; all our bills are paid regularly every quarter: and as for roguery," she added, playfully, "what would you say if any one were to use such an epithet coupled with your name? Who would allow him to use it? Why your very word would pass in Hawkstone for thousands any day."

Mr. Lomax bit his lips till the blood nearly came, but he said nothing.

"My dearest John," continued the lady, "you are surely taking things too much to heart. This little loss will soon be put to rights. I cannot help thinking you ate too much of that mock-turtle yesterday. It is this which makes you so gloomy. What will the world say, if they see you looking so miserable and anxious?"

And at this moment Mr. Lomax felt the necessity of attending to her suggestions, and of clearing up his brow, for a clerk came from the outer room, and presented several papers for him to sign. It was the day when the half-yearly interest was due on various small deposits, which had been intrusted to Mr. Lomax with the same confidence as if they had been locked up in the coffers of the Bank of

England, and for which the poor, but contented, owners were both surprised and pleased to receive from him their five per cent. with most satisfactory regularity; though parties acquainted with the mysteries of the money-market did wonder, at times, from what prosperous speculation the Hawkstone banker could derive profits so much beyond the ordinary rate of interest. And this morning our excellent friend Mabel had sent her Grey-School girl to obtain her half-yearly thirty pounds; and Mrs. Crump had despatched her maid on a similar errand. And, as Mr. Lomax went into his outer room, he was faced by Miss James, with a bright red flower in her bonnet, and a brighter smile on her face, coming, as she said to Mr. Lomax, to the very abode of Cræsus and Pluto (Miss James, in her classical instructions to her little pupils, had made a slight mistake in her mythology) to obtain the necessary resources for conglomerating (by which she meant settling) the academical arrangements of her establishment. Charles Bevan, also, had dropped in with a cheque from his mother; and he was then chatting with Mr. Vincent, who, for certain special reasons, was desirous of a confidential communication with Mr. Lomax on the best means of turning to advantage a sum of two thousand pounds, which he had accumulated as a little portion for his daughter Mary. And to all these several visitants, and especially to Mr. Vincent, Mr. Lomax's face assumed an aspect of cheerfulness and benignity, as if paying money was the happiness of his life, and receiving it a matter of supreme indifference.

"What a fortunate man you are," said Mr. Vincent to him, after having agreed to deposit the two thousand pounds in Mr. Lomax's hands for a few months, that it might obtain a larger interest than

the funds would offer. "How comfortable and snug you have every thing! Here am I, a poor country clergyman, obliged to scrape together from every quarter a few pounds to save my children from starving, while you are rolling in wealth, and have only to write your name to command thousands. And what an improvement you have made in your house! Have you thrown that other room into the drawing-room, as you proposed? I must just go and say how-do-ye-do to Mrs. Lomax, and admire her taste. Ah!" he concluded, shaking his head, "none but you rich bankers can indulge in such luxuries."

And Mr. Lomax affected to smile with an air of self-satisfaction; and having shaken him by the hand, he returned into his back parlour, not without hoping that his lady had taken her departure.

But Mrs. Lomax was still there. "My dear," she said, gently, "I hope you are more comfortable now. I could not help hearing what Mr. Vincent wanted with you. I am in a great hurry. Would you, if you please, give me that little cheque? Morris, the upholsterer, is waiting in-doors for it."

Mr. Lomax sat down and took up his pen. "Now remember," he said, "Maria, if I give you this now, I shall expect that you do not worry me again for a long time. I really cannot go on at this rate; and if you do not retrench, things must come to a crash."

"Nonsense, my love!" replied the lady. "How can things come to a crash, while such men as Mr. Vincent come to you every day, depositing such sums in your hands without asking what becomes of them, or trusting to any thing but your word? And then there is Mr. Villiers, again: has he opened his account with you yet? They say he has a mine of

wealth; and is so proud that he always keeps thousands of ready money at his banker's."

"I have not seen Mr. Villiers yet," replied the banker, gloomily.

"But of course you will see him, my dear — of course you will call on him. Why do you not have the horses put to the carriage, and drive over to-day, and leave your card?"

Mr. Lomax was silent. He generally bowed with submission to his lady's more accurate knowledge of etiquette and society; still he could not help confessing that he had heard Mr. Villiers was a very proud and haughty man, and perhaps might not like his calling."

"Not like your calling!" exclaimed the ambitious lady, indignantly. "Surely the great banker of Hawkstone is in a position to call on any one when he comes into the country, if it were Lord Claremont himself. If you do not pay him this attention, how can you expect that he should open his account with you? You owe it to yourself, my dear, to your station, to your family, and the girls, not to be backward in taking up a proper position in society. I do hope you will drive over this very day. Do you not keep your carriage? and cannot you give dinners in as good a style as any one in the country? I declare, since you bought those silver corner-dishes, our table is quite as respectable as Lady Sudborne's; and she does not keep a page — only a butler and a footman; besides which, she has no epergne, as we have. You certainly must call on Mr. Villiers; and then it will be quite proper to ask him to dinner."

Mrs. Lomax, once embarked in dreams of hospitable elegance and fashionable dinners, scarcely noticed that her husband was apparently engaged in arranging to fulfil one part of her proposal, and

to call that afternoon at the Priory. At last he said, "I think, Maria, if you will order the carriage, I will drive over after two o'clock."

"And you will have John, of course, in his new livery," said Mrs. Lomax. "It is so much more respectable."

"Yes, my dear," said Mr. Lomax (and he sighed). "If one is at the expense of a livery, one may as well make use of it."

"Pooh! pooh! my love," rejoined Mrs. Lomax, smilingly. "Why will you worry yourself about expenses; every thing will come right soon. And, indeed," she continued, "I cannot help thinking that Mr. Villiers living at the Priory will be a great advantage to the town. I dare say he will enter into society, and make it quite gay, particularly if he is to be the new member."

"He is not going to be the new member," said Mr. Lomax, mysteriously.

"And who is to be then?" said his lady. "Surely you won't allow that odious Mrs. Maddox to palm her radical protégé upon the town." And if any of our readers are startled by finding such a hostile epithet applied by one member of the Dorcas Society to an affectionate sister, they must allow for some bitterness of feeling produced by the rivalry of fashionable life and political party, even among the *deæ minores* of a country town; and must reflect that it was no little provocation to Mrs. Lomax's maternal feelings that Mr. Marmaduke Brook, the clever candidate, should be domesticated at her rival's house, and should daily parade the town with the pretty Miss Susan Maddox leaning familiarly on his arm, and followed by Mrs. Maddox and the plainer elder daughter—while the mother smiled significantly and exultingly to the greetings of her numerous acquaintance.

“Mr. Villiers has refused to come forward,” repeated Mr. Lomax, in a tone which implied that he should not be reluctant to have a still further secret extorted from him.

“And who is to come forward, then?” said Mrs. Lomax, catching a little smile, which her husband could not wholly suppress. “Now, you know, my dear John,” she exclaimed; “you can tell me all about it. You know there is a secret. You must tell me. I am sure there is something that I should like to know.”

But Mr. Lomax pursed up his lips, and affected resolute perseverance in silence.

“I must know,—I will know,” exclaimed the lady, looking him laughingly in the face, while he vainly endeavoured to appear unconcerned. “It is something about yourself, I am sure, John, by that smile—I know it is,” she continued, “Now tell me honestly, is it not? You are to be the new member—that is it, I am sure,” she exclaimed, exultingly; and she snatched up a note of Mr. Atkinson’s which lay on the table. “Here is Mr. Atkinson’s own hand-writing. I always said you would be a member of parliament.” And she proceeded to read the note, which revealed what her wishes had anticipated, and contained a strong request to Mr. Lomax from the members of the Conservative party, to allow himself to be put in nomination at the ensuing election.

“And of course you have consented,” said Mrs. Lomax, triumphantly.

Mr. Lomax shook his head.

“You do not mean,” said the lady, “that you have refused. You owe it to your family, Mr. Lomax, to the girls especially, not to neglect such an opportunity of giving them a position in society. It must be done, indeed. Why should not you be

in parliament as well as that wretched Quaker-man at Broughton, who has not half as fine a business as you have?"

"Where am I to get the money?" sighed Mr. Lomax, despairingly.

"Money!" exclaimed the lady—"Why will you think about the money? Have you not the command of thousands, and no one to ask you what you do with it?"

"It is not my own," faltered Mr. Lomax, with a groan.

"No, my love, I know that," said Mrs. Lomax, soothingly. "It is not your own exactly, but it is placed in your hands to do what you like with it; and you will always have the means of replacing it, so long as the firm flourishes, as it does now. And I am sure I cannot see any thing more likely to make it flourish than that you should be the member. It is so very respectable. It will give people such confidence."

Mr. Lomax looked miserable, and sighed again.

"Indeed, my love," continued the lady, "I must not allow you to mope and look wretched in this way. I do hope you will sit down at once and write an answer to Mr. Atkinson, that you will be very happy; and then we must all exert ourselves without a moment's delay. That odious Mrs. Maddox has been bustling about with her trolloping daughters, for I cannot tell how long, and canvassing among the poor people. Now I am sure your influence—the influence of the bank—must be twenty times greater. And I shall set off immediately.

"Stop, Maria, stop, my dear," cried Mr. Lomax.

But Mrs. Lomax stopped her ears instead of her feet, and laughingly declared that she would not listen. "You must come forward. Think," she continued, "what an advantage it will be for the

girls to be introduced into society as the daughters of the member for Hawkstone. You do not know what may come of it. I am sure the admiration which Anne excited by her singing at Brighton last year was astonishing ; and I should never be surprised at any thing. By the by, they say that Mr. Villiers is passionately fond of music. Anne must practise some duets before he dines with us. What day had we better fix on, Mr. Lomax ? It will be quite proper that you should give a series of dinners, as you are to be the member."

Mr. Lomax was silent.

"I suppose," the lady continued, "Mr. Villiers will return the call immediately, and then we can ask him for the next week : and do let us remember, Mr. Lomax, that we have a select party. Though we do live in the town, I should not like him to confound us with the common set of Hawkstone. If you would but have taken Rosewood Villa when it was to be let, instead of patching up this vulgar old house in the street, we should have been quite respectable—as respectable as Lady Sudborne herself. However, we must make the best of it."

Mr. Lomax still remained silent.

"One thing I must pray," continued the lady, "that you do not ask Mr. Morgan. He may be a very old friend of your family, and is a very good surgeon, no doubt, and a very excellent man ; but he is not quite the person to ask to meet Mr. Villiers, a man of rank. I will invite Lady Sudborne and Lady Thompson ; and if her young nephew, Sir Joseph Scargill, in the Guards, is with her, he will be an excellent person ; and then there is Captain O'Brien, nephew to Lord St. Aubyn — and we met him the other day at the races. He was evidently much struck with Anne. And I think," she said,

"we might ask Mr. Bevan. He is not much ; but he is a fellow of a college in Oxford, and that is a respectable thing ; and he knows Mr. Villiers."

"And Mr. Atkinson," added Mr. Lomax.

"No, my love," replied the lady ; "I must protest against Mr. Atkinson. No one has a greater respect for him than I have, or more regard for his family. But professional men are not quite the persons to give a tone to society ; and what I want Mr. Villiers to see is, that we have a tone, and understand how to do these things. I should like him to become quite intimate with us, and to be here frequently ; you cannot tell what may come of it. And I understand he is extremely fastidious in his society, and a man of the greatest fashion."

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Lomax, succumbing partly to his lady's volubility and confirmed habits of authority, and partly to certain calculations which he was making in his own mind with regard to the probable amount of Villiers's yearly balance, "I suppose you must have your own way, as usual."

"And we must have Champagne," added Mrs. Lomax, "and every thing, in fact, in the best style. And you must not insist on having the cloth removed for the dessert. When we dined at Lady Sudborne's, if you remember, last Christmas, it was left on the table. I observed it particularly. And even the Maddoxes have taken to the practice ; it is so fashionable : and I would not be beaten by them in any matter of fashion for the world,—a mere set of vulgar retired tradesmen."

Mr. Lomax sighed, and cast his eyes upon the paper of figures which lay before him ; but he said nothing.

"And I suppose," concluded Mrs. Lomax, as she was leaving the room, "there is no reason why your standing for the town should be a secret. I

will only mention it to one or two persons. I do not know any thing," she added, "which will give so much strength to the bank, and so much respectability to us all. I quite long to see how Lady Thompson looks when she hears it. Sir David, after all, was only a city knight, though he did leave her thirty thousand pounds; and, I must say, she gives herself considerable airs."

And without waiting for a reply, and leaving the Banker to the mingled pains and pleasures of his internal contemplations, Mrs. Lomax swam out of the room.

And for us it is unnecessary to follow her, except to be present one day in the following week, after the visit to the Priory had been made and returned, and the dinner invitations, carefully framed, had all been sent, and all but Villiers's accepted, and Mrs. Lomax's arrangements had been completed upon the most fashionable and aristocratic principles, to the indignation of Mrs. Maddox, who was duly informed of them, and to the envy of all the rest of the town. One only card remained unanswered; but it was the card of cards: and Mrs. Lomax's heart throbbed as the servant at length brought a note to her from the Priory, and, with a countenance blank as night, she perceived that it contained an excuse. We will not weary ourselves, as Mrs. Lomax wearied herself, and her husband, and her daughters, with supposing imaginary reasons. Charles Bevan alone knew the cause. But Villiers had inquired of him respecting Mr. Lomax's position and habits of living, and then had written a civil apology. "England," he said to Bevan, "is on the point of ruin by these idle attempts at style and fashion in a class who have not the means; and I, for one, will never encourage them. By-the-by, will you tell Mr. Morgan that I shall be detained in

the town till five o'clock to-morrow, and if he will let me come and partake of his family dinner I shall be very much obliged. I promised his little boy Harry to finish my story about the hippopotamus to him another day; and Miss Morgan was to practise for me that sonata of Cherubini's: and I like the whole family much—they are so simple and unpretending.”

CHAPTER XVI.

ANY of our readers who have ever had the calamity to be mixed up with the scenes of a popular election under the blessed representative system of Great Britain, will not require to be enlightened on the details of the Hawkstone election. There were the usual committees, who assembled night after night at the Bell and the Swan, and solaced themselves and their labours with the usual copious libations at the expense of the candidates. There were the ordinary placards and addresses from Brutus, and Cincinnatus, and Anti-Corruption, and Verax, and the hundred other anonymous prophets, who swarm forth, no one knows whence, on such occasions, like rats driven from their holes by a flood. There were the libels and counter-libels; epigrams and epithets; songs and parodies. Mr. Brook's friends declared that Mr. Lomax was a hypocrite; Mr. Lomax's committee insinuated that Mr. Brook, and every one connected with him, were atheists. Both exhausted the imagination in picturing the blessings which, if returned to parliament, they would shower down upon the country, and the calamities which would follow upon the success of their antagonist. The Odd Fellows, and the United Brothers, and the Temperance Clubs held their nightly orgies, to which the rival candidates respectively resorted, and harangued the smoke-involved and porter-drinking meetings. Each day the fever became more fierce; and even the calmest minds, instead of looking on the troubled ocean from the lofty post of contempt,

were drawn down into the waves, and absorbed in the tumult. Mr. Brown, the chemist, swore eternal enmity to Mr. Hopkins, the miller, because Mr. Hopkins voted for Mr. Brook, and Mr. Brown was on the committee of Mr. Lomax. Mrs. Morgan, instead of receiving a patronising nod from Mrs. Maddox, was actually cut by her in the street. Even John Hobbs, the constable, who, as an official personage, voted of course with the Conservatives, quarrelled with Peter Simpson, the brewer's drayman, and in his zeal for the good cause received such a deadly blow upon his nose, that the mayor, who was punctilious in the appearance of his retinue, considered him disqualified for the office of attending in his blue gown and with his gilt-knobbed staff at the borough sessions. Enmity, and envy, and hatred, and malice, penetrated into every house, and scowled upon every countenance.

As the great day approached, rumours waxed thick of bribes, and threats, and cajoleries, and seductions, and defections, and treacheries, which alternately appalled each party. Watches from each committee patrolled nightly round the town, to guard the more timid voters from assault, and the more needy from corruption. The public-houses were opened — the processions marshalled — flags suspended — bands collected — and even battles fought. And such had been the effect of Mr. Atkinson's well-managed policy, and of Mr. Lomax's well-distributed money, that the Radical party began at last to tremble. And at a meeting of the committee at Mrs. Maddox's, to the great consternation of that lady, who had long since resolved to be mother-in-law to the member for Hawkstone, and to the no less dismay of Mr. Marmaduke Brook, who had resolved, with equal certainty, not indeed to carry away a wife from Hawkstone, but to convert Hawk-

stone into a means of changing his 1500*l.* a year commissionership of gutters into a more permanent official post of at least 2000*l.* : it was hinted, that unless the greatest exertions were made to detach Mr. Ball at the silk-mills from the Conservative interest, Conservatism must triumph.

There was only one individual present who heard this announcement unmoved, and with a smile of nonchalance, like that of one who held in his own hands the power at any moment of preventing such a calamitous result. Mr. O'Foggarty had particularly requested that his name might be added to Mr. Brook's committee, in order that he might testify his zeal for the cause of civil and religious liberty all over the world, and might satisfactorily exhibit how cruelly the Church of Rome had been traduced by those who represented it as the restrainer of private judgment, or the enemy of Protestantism. He had been commanded to forward to Mr. Pearce daily and minute accounts of the proceedings. And Pearce had always assured him that, if it were necessary, he could ensure at any time the return of the Radical candidate ; but so long as circumstances seemed favourable, and success certain, it was unnecessary for him to move. But he had sufficiently intimated to O'Foggarty the nature of the train which he had laid, to satisfy that gentleman that the contest could have but one issue. The post that evening carried another letter to Mr. Pearce, which informed him of the threatening aspect of events ; and the next post brought a reply very brief, but very decisive. And Mr. O'Foggarty, as he sat by his fire-side with the letters in his hand, hugged himself, as persons do, when, in secret and unseen, they await the firing of a train which is to blow up all around them, they themselves remaining in safety.

He rose early the next morning—very early, finished his breakfast sooner than usual, took his hat and stick, and made his appearance at the door of Mr. Lomax's bank five minutes after it had been opened. The head clerk (for Mr. Lomax had returned the night before with a bad head-ache from a saturnalia of the Odd Fellows at the Pig and Carrot, and was not yet drest) received Mr. O'Foggarty with a cheerful smile, and was proceeding to take down a large ledger to enter, as he had been in the habit of doing for some months past, the fresh subscriptions to the Catholic Chapel, as he termed it; but his countenance fell, and his blood flowed back with a sudden revulsion, when Mr. O'Foggarty, with a soft and insinuating tone, and with something of an apology, requested to receive the full amount of subscriptions which had been paid in, about 540*l*. Well trained, however, and accustomed to dissemble the pains of payment, the clerk, grasping a handful of Mr. Lomax's notes, proceeded to ask how Mr. O'Foggarty would wish to take the sum. But all his self-command was unable to conceal his surprise and dismay when that gentleman, with another bland apology, requested to have it in gold and Bank of England notes. The clerk looked up and then down, and then, with a lingering hand, unclosed a secret drawer, counted out the sovereigns and the notes, placed them in Mr. O'Foggarty's hand, and suffered him to retire without returning his polite bow, or being able in any way to recover from his stupefaction.

A few minutes afterwards Mr. Lomax entered the counting-house with the morning letters open in his hand, and not a few nervous twitches playing on his countenance. He bade the clerk take down two or three ponderous leather-bound vellum folios—ran his eye over the accounts in them—closed

the books — opened them again — then took up the newspaper, but without being able to read it — then looked out of the window — then started, as the door opened, but recovered himself on finding that it was only Mrs. Crump's Abigail, who wanted change for a five pound note; — and then, after hearing the account of Mr. O'Foggarty's visit, during which the twitches in the face became more numerous, he retired into his back room, and there sat down in his black leathern chair, gazing on the fire.

And while Mr. Lomax was in this posture, Mr. Pearce, in London, was driving about, in a hired cab, from street to street in the City, and holding various secret colloquies with bill-brokers and others. He was evidently engaged in some deeply interesting negotiation. Nor were Mr. Lomax's London bankers omitted in his round of visits. And twice he returned to their house in Lombard Street; and twice he was closeted with the head partner in his sanctuary. And that gentleman, with a face of profound and imperturbable prudence, had more than once pored carefully over the long files of the Hawkstone Bank account, and had closed his perusal with an ominous shake of the head. From Lombard Street Mr. Pearce had hurried his jaded cab to Mincing Lane; and there he had entered a paved back court, with a black-leaved solitary poplar in it, and ascending a flight of stairs, he had had an interview with Messrs. Hardbottle, the London correspondents of Mr. Ball, the proprietor of the Hawkstone silk-mills. And this interview, also, had appeared to terminate with little satisfaction to the correspondents, who immediately, on its coming to a close, had despatched a clerk-like letter and a variety of stamped documents to Mr. Ball himself; and Mr. Ball himself, with a very warm and anxious

countenance, had proceeded with them without delay to Mr. Lomax ; and Mr. Lomax——But we must not anticipate.

These various negotiations and mysterious movements had taken place on the Thursday and Friday ; and on Saturday Mrs. Lomax had felt it her conscientious duty to press on Mr. Lomax the propriety, and indeed necessity, of giving a sumptuous dinner to Mr. Bowler and several other of the neighbouring gentry ; who, though they looked with no little jealousy on the banker's elegant establishment, were partly under pecuniary obligations to him, and partly had no objection to a very comfortable dinner in the town after the fatigues of the magistrates' meeting. The dinner had passed — the champagne was pronounced excellent — the dessert was sumptuous. Mr. Atkinson had delivered a most eloquent harangue to Mr. Bowler, who was fast asleep, on the increasing prosperity of Hawkstone. Mr. Warburton, who was a political economist, had enlarged on the beautiful system of credit, on which the prosperity of the British empire was founded, and by which every one was enabled to bring into play, and to employ in grand speculations, every thing that he possessed without the necessity of allowing any part to lie dead. Many had been the exclamations of wonder at the thriving state of commerce — many the congratulations on the rapid progress of the Hawkstone railway — deep the admiration at the spirit with which Messrs. Silkem, the linen-drappers, and Messrs. Brown, their rivals in the trade, had expended enormous sums in plate glass and gilded pillars to adorn the streets of Hawkstone ; some wonder, also, was expressed that Mr. Ball, at the silk-mills, had been enabled to invest so large a capital in buildings, particularly as the silk trade was flat, and two other mills were

rising within half a mile, which would probably cause a material reduction in the profits. But at the mention of Mr. Ball's name, Mr. Lomax, who had been silent and gloomy during dinner (worn out, as Mr. Atkinson whispered, with the excitement of canvassing, and the responsibilities of his approaching honours), lapsed into more serious nervous twitches than he had experienced before ; and, hastily passing round the rich-cut glass claret decanters, he proposed that they should adjourn to the ladies.

To the ladies accordingly they retired. Mrs. Lomax received them in the gay but rather gaudily-furnished double drawing-room. She herself, majestic in a splendid turban and bird-of-Paradise plume, was already practising the dignified manner which became the lady of the member for Hawkstone. Her page, covered over with sugar-loaf buttons, was dispensing coffee from a large silver salver. Miss Anne was seated at the piano, prepared, in default of a more youthful hearer, to perform for the somnolent Mr. Bowler the airs which she had so studiously practised to fascinate the ear of Villiers. Miss Lomax, less brilliant in manner and appearance, but not less ambitious, was enlarging to Miss Mabel Brook, who had been permitted to come in as a refresher in the evening, on the delight with which she was looking forward to accompanying her papa to London when the session opened — on the probability of his taking a house in Baker street for them — on the prospect of admission into London society, which their acknowledged station and rank would then ensure them, — and she even hinted at some tickets for Almack's, which, through the mediation of Lady Sudborne, she felt convinced that they would be able to compass. Mr. Atkinson, standing on the bright copious-

flowered rug, with his back to the fire, and his gilded coffee-cup in one hand and his coat tails in the other, was congratulating Mrs. Lomax on the prospect of the poll; and the lady was listening to him graciously and condescendingly, but without compromising her dignity. The other gentlemen were looking over some very third-rate works of art, gorgeously bound, which were displayed on the round rosewood table, and seemed disposed to wish themselves anywhere else; when the street-door bell rang violently. Mr. Lomax quite jumped from his chair; and Mrs. Lomax was startled to see his colour change.

"It is only Mr. Bowler's carriage," she observed. "Why, my love, what is the matter? This troublesome election has made you quite nervous."

But Mr. Lomax knew that it was not Mr. Bowler's carriage, for no sound of wheels had accompanied the bell. But a heavy step was heard coming up the stairs, and the awkward footman, whom all his lady's care and refinement could not teach to wear his red plush breeches elegantly, or to move without creaking shoes, came up significantly to Mr. Lomax, and informed him that there was a strange gentleman below, from London, who wanted to see him immediately upon business.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Atkinson, — "something, I suppose, about Horlock's vote."

But he was surprised to see that Mr. Lomax had turned pale, and could scarcely hold his tea cup. At last the servant was ordered to show the gentleman into the study, and Mr. Lomax slowly rose from his seat, and catching hold of the chair to support himself, he with difficulty staggered out of the room.

"I fear, my dear madam," said Mr. Atkinson, "that this troublesome business is too much for our

excellent friend. Nervous excitement that — over fatigue! but he will soon recover it, when once he is in parliament. You will go with him, of course, to London?"

"I rather think we shall," said Mrs. Lomax, with dignity. "I wish that my daughters should be introduced. And with their father's position and establishment, I think it will be right to show them more of the world than they can see in this little confined spot. After all, we must confess that Hawkstone is a vulgar place. Brighton is my delight! Such charming society! and most fashionable too! Oscar," she called languidly, to her page, "remove my coffee-cup, and bring me that eau-de-Cologne. It is wearying, Mr. Atkinson, this being obliged to receive, as we do; but our position renders it necessary. Pray, how do you like those vases—are they not exquisite?"

Mr. Atkinson duly admired the gaudy expensive ornaments which stood on the mantel-piece; and then he pulled up his thick ill-folded white neck-cloth, which was Mrs. Lomax's aversion, and walked away to pay his compliments to Miss Anne, who, seated at the piano in the inner drawing-room, was congratulating herself to Mr. Warburton on the prospect of her more frequently attending the Opera in London. "A box," she said, "is very expensive. But I suppose in papa's new position he will think it right to do as others do. He will owe it to himself and his constituents to support his position."

Mr. Warburton made no reply, but a little shrug of contempt. And as Mr. Lomax did not return, and Mrs. Lomax began to yawn, and the gentlemen from the country were anxious to return home, the party broke up.

"Well! we have had a tolerably agreeable party,"

said Mrs. Lomax to her eldest daughter, as the last visitant closed the door. "Every thing went off extremely well; and I do think the table looked remarkably elegant. Mr. Bowler admired those corner-dishes amazingly: I do not think he has any himself."

Miss Lomax yawned, and assented.

"There is only one thing, I think," continued Mrs. Lomax, "that we want just now, and that is two handsome chandeliers for these rooms. We want the gold paper well lighted up. You know the one in Lady Sudborne's drawing-room? How well it looks! And I think that, as the member for the town, your papa must take care to have every thing about him in good style. He owes it to himself. I shall certainly make him get us some. Do go down to the study, Mary, and see if he is there, and ask him to come up. I will point it out to him at once before John puts out these wax lights."

Mary, with evident reluctance and signs of weariness, rose slowly, and proceeded to her papa's study. She knocked, but no one answered. She opened the door. The candles were burning down in their sockets; a chair overturned lay upon the floor; one of the lights flickered and went out as she approached the table, and the other burned so dimly that she could not discern what was that black thing lying on the ground, behind the table. Was it her father's great-coat? She snuffed the candle and went to pick it up, and hang it on the chair: but before she touched it she screamed with terror, for from the sleeve of the coat a hand projected. "Papa," she cried, "papa, is that you? What is the matter?" But there was no answer, and the poor girl, screaming and shrieking, endeavoured to lift the unhappy man from the floor.

Her mother had just arranged in her head a well-turned sentence with which she felt satisfied that she should prevail on her husband to spend at least fifty guineas in providing the splendid chandeliers, when her daughter's screams startled and terrified her. Herself, and Anne, and the servants, were the next moment in the study. "Master has fallen into a fit," said the footman.

"Send instantly for Mr. Morgan," exclaimed Mrs. Lomax, who even then did not lose her presence of mind. "Raise him up—place him in the chair. It is all this terrible election—nervous excitement, too much for him! He will soon be better. Bring some cold water and salts."

And Mrs. Lomax prepared to chafe the temples and to unfasten the cravat of her wretched husband. But just as the head had been raised up, more lights were brought into the room, and a single glance showed to all present that it was not a fit. Mr. Lomax was dead.

"What is that you have picked up in the corner?" said the footman to the page, while the rest were endeavouring to disengage the stupified, insensible wife from the corpse of her husband.

"It's a bottle," said the page.

"A bottle of what?" asked the footman. "Show it me."

"Here's something written on it," said the page. "'Prussic Acid!' I wonder what that is!"

CHAPTER XVII.

VILLIERS was mounting his horse the next day at the great porch of the Priory ; alarmed by some hasty rumours, he was preparing to ride into Hawkstone to ascertain the truth of them, when Mr. Atkinson's humble one-horse four-wheeled phaeton drove into the other end of the avenue. The appearance of Mr. Atkinson himself told at once a tale of unspeakable mischief. He was haggard, bewildered, almost distracted; and it was some time before Villiers could prevail on him to enter the library and compose himself, that he might explain the state of circumstances. And when he was able to tell his tale, it was so confused, so full of dreadful anticipations, for himself, so broken with exclamations of horror, that Villiers could scarcely gather what it meant.

At last he learnt the terrible event which has just been narrated. And his first thought was, that some aberration of mind, brought on by the fatigues and anxieties of the election, had fallen on the miserable victim of a vulgar ambition. But Mr. Atkinson shook his head. It was something worse—far worse. The bank had stopped that morning. The solicitor of the London bank had met Mr. Atkinson at an early hour ; an examination of books had taken place ; and it was found that, instead of possessing property, the Hawkstone bank had been insolvent for years ; and that an enormous defalcation could already be detected, not without suspicions of fraud. Villiers made no remark, but he remembered the invitation to dinner.

“But this,” continued Mr. Atkinson, “was not the worst. There had been speculations and engagements with the proprietors of the silk-mills, to enable them to commence operations. And Mr. Ball, of the silk-mills, was a bankrupt also. And so far as it could be traced, a system of accommodation bills had been contrived and carried on for many years, which would now involve even Mr. Smith at the factory and Sir Matthew Blake himself. Hawkstone, the prosperous, flourishing Hawkstone, with its new manufactories, its brilliant shops, its railroads, its coal-pits, and its iron-mines, had for some time past offered a tempting field to the investments of grasping capitalists and needy speculators; and its whole existence was a fabric of credit” (accursed credit, thought Villiers, the child of avarice and mother of fraud!). “Beneath all its splendid exterior, its flourishing projects, the ground had been undermined, as it were, and honey-combed, and a single shock was sufficient to bring the whole to the ground. There was not a single shopkeeper in the town,” said Mr. Atkinson, “who could calculate for one day on his own security. Each had been leaning on the support of another; filling his windows with plate glass, and lighting his counter with ormolu lamps, on credit and speculation; and a blow levelled against one would, in all human probability, prostrate them all.”

“And the poor,” asked Villiers, anxiously, “are they likely to suffer much? Were there many notes in circulation?”

Mr. Atkinson, who was really a kind-hearted, benevolent man, could not hear the question, overcome and unnerved as he was, without bursting into tears. His own door had been beset that morning with a crowd of terrified, desperate, ruined inhabitants—old men who had lost their

all; decrepit women, who had now no homes to look to but the poor-house; industrious workmen, who had saved their earnings for a coming emergency, and their savings were all gone. And it was with some difficulty that he had prevented their misery and passion from bursting out into some fierce act of vindictiveness, even against the equally miserable survivors in the unhappy banker's own family.

"And what of them?" asked Villiers.

"Penniless," replied Mr. Atkinson, "utterly and entirely penniless; and chiefly their own fault—their own extravagance! But this," he continued, "could be borne. But there were others, innocent of any fault but misplaced confidence, whom nothing awaited but the workhouse. Mrs. Atkinson had been that morning to see three persons—poor Mabel, the aged Mrs. Crump, and Mrs. Bevan; and no words could picture the scenes which she had witnessed."

Villiers groaned aloud. And Mr. Atkinson rose up and went to the window to conceal the tears which coursed one another down his cheeks.

Villiers sat down and wrote a note, and rang the bell immediately for his groom to take it into Hawkstone to Mr. Bevan.

"And now," he said, turning to Mr. Atkinson, who, by disburthening his mind and giving way to his misery, had become more composed, "will you let me speak to you candidly and openly?"

Mr. Atkinson, who seemed as if he longed to say something, and yet could not bring himself to do so, looked up in hope.

"I am aware," said Villiers, "that in your situation you must require at certain periods large pecuniary accommodations, which were probably afforded you by the late bank, and the withdrawal of them under such circumstances may cause you temporary

embarrassment. I have always had reason to put the highest confidence in your honour; and it will be only a slight return for the care which you have taken of my property, if I can assist you in this emergency. But I will say, honestly and openly, that this assistance must be limited to that sum which is required by yourself personally to carry on the necessary machinery of your business; and that I can offer no encouragement whatever to that system of advances, and borrowing, and forestalling, which, whether it prevail among landed proprietors, or manufacturing and commercial speculators, is one of our greatest curses, the most sure and certain cause of the destruction with which England is now beset. I must not presume to enter into your own private arrangements; but I am sure you will understand me."

Mr. Atkinson's face lightened up, as if a cloud had passed away from his eyes. He rose and seized Villiers's hand with a warmth of gratitude, of which his cool, reserved nature seemed wholly incapable. "My wife," he cried, "my dear wife! I have ten children, and you have saved them!" and the poor man wept like a child.

But Villiers kindly but calmly begged him to resume his seat. "Your time," he said, — "every hour at such a crisis must be precious." And he sat down to his table to write a check.

"Will you name the sum, if you please?" said Villiers.

Mr. Atkinson hesitated, and looked down, as if he dared not.

"Be assured," said Villiers, "you cannot do me a greater kindness than by giving me the means of making you perfectly comfortable. In this fearful crash, and in your situation, you will require all

your composure and energy of mind. A great part of the burden of such a calamity must fall upon you. And if to the public distress your own private anxieties are added, you will be unable to render the town the services which will be required of you. And I am well aware that your extent of business must subject you to very heavy claims ; and that the expenses of a large family, and your own honourable moderation and liberality, cannot but confine your resources. I shall not be satisfied, indeed, if you do not leave this place perfectly at your ease. Shall I say 2000*l*." and Villiers named a sum nearly a third beyond what Mr. Atkinson's most sanguine wishes had calculated on.

Once more he sprang up, and would almost have fallen at Villiers's knees.

"Are you sure that it is enough," said Villiers, "perfectly sure?"

"More, far more than I want," replied Mr. Atkinson. "How can I ever repay you?"

Villiers finished his check, rang the bell for Mr. Atkinson's carriage, and was about to quit the room on some excuse, that he might leave the happy man to himself, but Mr. Atkinson stopped him. "Sir, he said, "I cannot accept this without giving you some guarantee; my bond, at least, till I can place in your hands other securities which I possess."

"You can do this, my dear sir," said Villiers, "when you return home, and can deposit it with my papers."

"And the interest," continued Mr. Atkinson. "I cannot accept it at less than five per cent."

"My dear sir," answered Villiers, "this is not a moment to enter into questions of political economy, and I fear the world generally would scarcely understand me. But I have, long since, made it a

principle, in such cases as the present, not to accept interest."

"Not accept interest!" exclaimed Mr. Atkinson, opening his eyes to their fullest width, and for a moment forgetting all his miseries, and all his relief from them, in wonder at such a proposition. "Not accept interest!"

Villiers could not help smiling at the astonished and bewildered aspect, which looked up into his face.

"Not accept five per cent.!" continued Mr. Atkinson, "legal interest? I do not understand you, sir."

Villiers looked out of the window, and finding that his visiter's humble conveyance had not yet been brought to the door, he did not disdain to explain his meaning further.

"Might I ask," he said, "what profit you will yourself make upon the expenditure of this sum, applied, as it will be, to maintaining the regular machinery of your business? Will it be more than is sufficient to indemnify you for the time, anxiety, responsibility, and labour, which you must devote to its proper employment?"

"Certainly not," was the reply.

"And if it were more," continued Villiers; "if in any profession or any business the profits should, for a time, exceed this limit, it is an acknowledged principle of political economy that they must soon be reduced within the limit by the natural action of competition."

Mr. Atkinson bowed.

"And if," continued Villiers, "I were to lock up this money in a chest, would it produce me any interest of itself? Can money grow?"

Mr. Atkinson shook his head.

"Its increase, therefore," said Villiers, "must

depend on the labour, industry, and talent, which are devoted to its employment, and ought to be the remuneration of them. And if I, who do not labour, receive any portion of it, I am detracting so much from the fair and equitable reward which Providence has designed for them. I am eating the bread of idleness, and you are toiling without adequate compensation. Is this equitable? Is it agreeable to that Divine law, which has commanded us to eat our bread in the sweat of our brow?"

Mr. Atkinson, in his agitated state of feeling, was unable to follow up the reasoning. He could only stare and look bewildered. And Villiers, feeling that it was useless to pursue the subject, only added, "Prior to all such reasonings, a Christian has the most distinct intimations of the will of Heaven on this subject, both from the Scriptures, and from the voice of the Church; and this is sufficient to bind his conscience. And I think you will find, on reflection, that, if the principle were generally acted on, no such fatal calamities would occur as that which has now fallen upon us. The refusal of interest would remove the temptation to give facilities for speculation. There would be no idle members of society dependent for their daily bread, not upon their own honest industry, but on the success of speculations in others. And though we might be less wealthy as a nation, we should be more honest as individuals, and more safe from misery and ruin. But I see your carriage is come to the door, and I must not detain you;" and, having shaken Mr. Atkinson's hand, he contrived, at the same time, to leave the cheque within it, went out with him to the hall-door, and saw the wondering and bewildered man, with a mixture of joy and tears, drive off to Hawkstone.

The same evening, about six o'clock, just after

Villiers had mounted his horse at Mrs. Bevan's door, and rode off, on his return to the Priory, Mrs. Bevan, pale and agitated, and yet not without a mixture of joy on her worn and anxious countenance, came out, leaning on Charles Bevan's arm, both silent, both of them with their eyes filled with tears. Charles left his mother at poor Mabel's door; and Mrs. Bevan, admitted by the sobbing little Grey girl, and almost unable to move herself, ascended the narrow stairs. She tapped, and a low half-choked voice bade her come in. But no sooner had Mabel caught sight of her friend than she rose, and threw herself into her arms, but without speaking; neither of them could utter a word. At last, Mrs. Bevan disengaged herself from Mabel's almost convulsive embrace, and placing her in a chair, she sat down by her side, and took her hand, and held it in her own.

Even then Mabel's thoughts were more for others than for herself. "And you, too, are ruined," she said, at last. "How good of you to think of me — to come to me!"

Mrs. Bevan only pressed her hand in reply, and looked round the room. Stunned and amazed as Mabel had been with a blow which at once had plunged her into utter destitution, without a friend who could give her assistance, or an occupation to which she could look for support, her active conscientious mind, instead of giving way to useless lamentations, had, after a long struggle, recovered somewhat of its energy; and she was resolved, without delay, to face the worst, and to occupy herself with necessary duties. It was a cold cheerless evening, but the grate was without a fire; Mabel knew that she had no means to pay for it. A single rushlight burnt dimly on the table, which was covered with account-books, and sundry heaps of

silver. Mabel was making up the accounts of the various little charitable funds, of which she had so long acted as secretary and treasurer, afraid to retain in her hands even a shilling which was not her own, under the menaces of the coming temptation. The little girl had brought her tea-things as usual, but, except a morsel of dry bread, nothing had been tasted; even that Mabel had grudged to herself, for she knew not if it was her own. The little girl was to go home the next morning to her friends, and Mabel (she had no money) had given her some comfortable clothing from her own little wardrobe. She had also asked Mr. Silkem's permission to remain one or two days longer in her rooms, until she could look round, and find some shelter, or some situation. But Mr. Silkem was a Liberal, and it was one of his first principles that every man should take care of number one. He had therefore sufficiently indicated to Mabel, that as she could no longer pay for her lodgings, it would be only justice to himself and his family that she should leave it without any delay for another occupant. And with a bursting heart, and swell of indignation at his hardheartedness, Mabel had resolved on quitting the house the very next morning.

"And where will you go?" asked Mrs. Bevan, tenderly.

"To the poor-house," sobbed Mabel; "I have no other home. I have no friends who can relieve me."

Mrs. Bevan could not refrain from weeping. "No, my dear Mabel," she said, "you can come to me, at least for a time."

"But you, too, are ruined," said Mabel; "you have lost your all. Mr. Morgan — every one is ruined. I cannot be a burden to you. But it is God's will, and I do not repine. I can bear it — I can work — I can wash — He will not desert me."

Mrs. Bevan could not refrain from folding her in her arms, and mingling her own tears with Mabel's. "I am, indeed, ruined," she said, "and have lost all. But Charles has still his small fellowship; and he will increase it by taking pupils. And for the present," she added, "means have been supplied us by a hand which I must not mention, until we can look round and provide some other resources. And the same hand, which has been stretched out to us, has made it a particular request that you would come and take shelter under our roof—not only you, but others: our house is large enough; and humbled and destitute, and softened as we all shall be by this appalling stroke, we may even find comfort from being together."

Mabel looked up, as scarcely understanding her.

"I mean, dearest," said Mrs. Bevan, "that I have the means at present of receiving you; and that it is the wish of the benefactor, to whom I owe them, that they should be shared with you: you will not, therefore, be a burden to me, but rather a comfort and assistance. There are many things which we can do together, which will be good both to others and ourselves."

"Who is it?" exclaimed Mabel. "Who could have thought of me? It could not be my cousin!"

Mrs. Bevan shook her head.

"And I have no claims on any one else," sobbed Mabel. "How kind! how merciful of Providence!" And Mabel wearied herself in vain with endeavouring to guess the name of her unknown benefactor; but Mrs. Bevan checked her. "It was the wish of the same person," she said,—“his own especial request, that no notice should be taken of his aid, and no endeavour made to trace the hand which ad-

ministered it. And he had also begged Mrs. Bevan to put at Mabel's disposal a little purse for immediate necessities, which she was to consider as coming from a friend, and as belonging not to man but to God." And Mrs. Bevan placed in her hands a purse of twenty guineas. For he who was thus the dispenser of the mercies of Providence was not satisfied with providing for absolute want, but, like the Being whose minister he was, he had thoughtfully and minutely anticipated all the little difficulties and exigencies of such an emergency, and endeavoured to palliate them all.

"And now I must leave you," said Mrs. Bevan; "for the same blow which has fallen upon us has fallen on many others. And there is one case of misery opposite to your own door, which I have been commissioned to relieve also."

"Ah!" said Mabel, "poor Mrs. Crump! Her window-blinds have been down all the day; and my little girl told me that she had had a paralytic attack about half an hour after the failure of the bank had reached her ears. She is ruined, too; and at her age—poor thing! without a friend or relation in the world—nothing but the poor-house to look to! I was going to her myself," continued Mabel, "as soon as I had arranged these things, to ask if I could sit up with her to-night; for her maid is any thing but attentive to her, and thinks of nothing but her wages."

"I am going," said Mrs. Bevan, "to offer her a room in my own house for the present. There, at least, she will be attended to with more care and kindness than even in her own lodging; and, together, we might contribute something to her comfort. If we ourselves have been saved from utter destitution, our first thought must be to save others."

Mabel caught at the thought of being useful. And sorrowful, yet calm, and not despairing, and even with a ray of comfort in their eyes, the two friends embraced once more ; and Mrs. Bevan proceeded on her errand of mercy.

No one came to the door to answer the bell, and she opened it herself. The passage was dimly lighted ; and without making a noise, Mrs. Bevan proceeded up the stairs. No one was in the poor old lady's room ; her wheel-chair stood in a corner, vacant. The cupboard in which she kept her sweet cake was open, and a glass was on the table, as if her maid-servant, or some one, had been emptying a decanter of wine which stood on one of the shelves. And, on moving softly to the bedroom-door, which was ajar, Mrs. Bevan saw through it the maid herself, upon her knees, before a drawer, apparently busily engaged in ransacking its contents. A low groan proceeded from the close-curtained bed, but Martha paid no attention to it, except to turn impatiently round, prepared, if it had been necessary, to repress any murmur or complaint on the part of the poor aged sufferer by a sharp reply. Solitary—destitute—friendless, with no one to watch her seemingly last moments but an unfeeling hireling, the unhappy lady was lying on her bed of suffering. Alas ! how many round us are lying in the same state, because the church has provided no shelter for them within her own bosom, and under her own ministering hands ! The mistress of the house came up the stairs, but it was only to express her complaints and wonder that Mrs. Crump had no friends to come and attend to her, and to ask how she was to be paid for her lodgings, and for some things which Mr. Morgan had ordered, now that Mrs. Crump herself had lost all her money. Mrs. Bevan had been provided with the

means of answering this question by the same hand which had provided for the temporary necessities of Mabel. A nurse was sent for, Martha was dismissed, and the next day, with Mr. Morgan's permission, the poor old lady was removed to Mrs. Bevan's house; and Mabel took her station by her bed-side, watching over every movement, and answering every request for help, with the tenderness of a daughter.

The next evening Charles Bevan was seated in the library at the Priory—grave, saddened, chastened with the blow which he had received himself, and awe-struck with the storm of calamity, which, like thunder from a cloudless sky, had burst upon his native town. Villiers had been inquiring for his mother and her two charges.

"They are wonderfully well, considering what has happened," replied Bevan. "It is singular how engagement in active duties, especially in those which are appointed for us, soothes and quiets the mind. When Miss Brook was asking, this morning at breakfast, how she could recompense you for all your kindness, my mother told her that she could not gratify you more than by undertaking to nurse poor Mrs. Crump. And she has devoted herself to it with delight."

"And will it be painful to Mrs. Bevan," asked Villiers, "to have her house occupied by two such inmates?"

"My mother," replied Bevan, "has in the first place no choice. She has been deprived of every thing but the little which I can supply to her; and my fellowship is only 100*l.* a year; and all which I may obtain beyond this by taking pupils is of course precarious, and cannot amount to much. But without considering this, my mother is a woman of remarkable good sense, of a sincere but deep piety, of

practical habits, and active occupations ; and I am sure she would willingly devote herself to any work which might be really useful to others, and sanctioned by the Church."

Villiers remained silent and absorbed in thought. At last he said, "It is a common impression, that females cannot be brought to live together under the same roof without jealousies and bickerings ; and that their minds are rendered frivolous and weak by associating too much with each other. Do you think that this is the case ?"

"I think," replied Bevan, "that if females unfit for a life of religion and charity are forced into it against their will, if they are rigidly and unnaturally bound down by vows, if they are excluded from moderate intercourse with others, and treated, in fact, like mere children, as is too often the case in nunneries of Romanism, then their minds, instead of being strengthened and elevated, may be deteriorated. But I cannot see why this should be the case, where no such strained and artificial system exists."

"And how many duties there are," said Villiers, "which can only be accomplished well by females, and by females associated together in a body ! Take, for instance, Miss Brook's infant school. None but females can undertake the charge of very young children or communicate effectually with their parents, and teach their parents by degrees to aid in the work of a sound education, instead of neutralising it, or doing worse by their own examples. And how can one female bear this burden ? If there were a body, while they nurtured up the young under a cloud, as it were, of holy influences and personal reverence, they would not run the risk of withdrawing the child's affections from its own parents, any more than the cloud of saints and martyrs, whom

the Church teaches us to reverence, withdraws us from the one and only Being who is to be the centre of our love ; while to fix our thoughts and affections upon a single saint, as the Romish system encourages us to do, necessarily tends to draw us from the immediate communion with our Lord—not to speak of the powerlessness of any single arm either to excite reverence, or to enforce obedience, or to communicate knowledge. By-the-by, what has become of that poor young woman who had the care of the infant school ? I think you told me that she had also sustained a heavy loss ? ”

“She has lost all her savings,” said Bevan. “And the school itself, I fear, will now be abandoned ; for most of our charitable subscriptions, trifling as they have been, will probably be withdrawn. In the nineteenth century our first retrenchment is usually in our charities, and the second in our payment of tithes.

“And had the school no funds of its own ?” asked Villiers.

“None, whatever. Who would bestow permanent endowments on an individual teacher, with whose death everything may fall to the ground, or upon a self-constituted committee of subscribers, under no ecclesiastical control, who in a few years may become Unitarians or anything ? The very notion of endowments without specified principles, and a fixed organisation to secure their maintenance, is an absurdity.”

“Not now,” replied Villiers. “Sir Robert Peel does not think so. He has now pledged the State to sanction and secure the perpetual transmission of property to any hands, and for any purpose, assuming that it is a sufficient assertion of principle to have repudiated any principle whatever. This is the ground they have taken in the Dissenters’ Chapel Bill, as it

is called,—that the money was left for the propagation of no specific doctrine, by men who had no creed, and made it a principle to have none; and therefore it may be legitimately applied to propagate any blasphemy.”

Bevan sighed. But his mind was too full of sad thoughts nearer to himself for him to enter into the political question.

“And I suppose the subscriptions to the County Hospital will also fall off,” said Villiers, “and the District Visiting Society, and, in fact, nearly all the charities? What is to become of the poor?”

Bevan sighed again. “I am not sure,” he said, “that the District Visiting Societies are the best things that could be contrived for the poor. The visitors are too often young and inexperienced. Those to whom the office might be more safely entrusted are engaged in family duties; and the whole system, perhaps, requires to be more thoroughly permeated with a sound domestic and Church spirit. It is not equal to the Romish system of Sisters of Charity.”

“They live together,” replied Villiers; “their whole life is devoted to the task; they form a religious body in the hands of the Church; and thus they have a dignity of their own, and a proper ecclesiastical character, which seems very much to correspond with that of the widows in the early Church. And from living together under rule, and in the constant participation of the ordinances of the Church, they acquire a tone of mind which can scarcely be attained by individuals condemned to a solitary life in the midst of the world. What an admirable Sister of Charity Miss Brook would have made, with her benevolence, her activity, and freedom from domestic ties! And how far happier and more useful her life would have been than it has

been in furthering all the wild enthusiastic projects of a religion without a creed and without a priesthood?"

"One thing has struck me much," said Bevan, "in inquiries which I have made, and which seems to explain one obvious defect in the ministration of our Visiting Societies. I used at one time to fancy that the poor were insensible to the value and authority of an external commission. But I am convinced that it weighs with them much, and renders them far more accessible both to those who would instruct, and to those who would relieve them. And the purely voluntary character of our Visiting Societies gives an appearance of intrusiveness and presumption to their labour, against which the independence of the poorest is tempted to revolt."

"What are you founding your opinion on?" asked Villiers.

"I think it might be defended," replied Bevan, "on general principles. But the facts which principally confirmed it in my own mind were communicated to me by a clergyman who was sent by one of our bishops as a sort of missionary to the labourers on a railroad. He told me that he found them sunk in the lowest depths of ignorance and profligacy. His business was to obtain any opportunities which he could find of speaking to them, and of reading to them on the Sundays. And among many other anecdotes, he told me that whatever abuse he encountered from them at first, or whatever reluctance they showed to listen to him, it ceased when he explained to them that he did not come of himself, but was sent by the bishop. 'Ah, sir!' they used to say, 'if you are sent by the bishop, that is quite another thing. We thought you were a methodist parson!'"

Villiers was struck with the anecdote. "And

you think, then," he said, "that if any institution like that of the Sisters of Charity was formed in the English Church, it should be regularly commissioned by the bishop of the diocese?"

"Certainly," said Bevan; "and placed under the immediate control of the clergyman of the parish. Without this they would become either futile or mischievous."

"Poor Dr. Grant," said Villiers, "would, I fear, be very much alarmed to hear of such a plan. By-the-by, how is he, since this second paralytic seizure?"

"He is very ill," replied Bevan. "Mr. Morgan told me, as I came here, that he was much alarmed for him. He, like so many others, has lost almost all that he had—all the accumulations from the profits of the living; and the shock was too great for him."

"And how should such an institution be supported?" asked Villiers, after a pause.

"Partly by a small endowment," replied Bevan, "partly by the small incomes which the members themselves would bring into the common stock, partly by voluntary offerings, and partly by little payments from the school. But I think you would find many persons, such as daughters of clergymen, widows, young females born in respectable positions in society, and left with a narrow income, who would gladly take advantage of an institution well planned, and authorised by the heads of the Church, and who would devote themselves to works of benevolence and charity as a corporate body. And still more might be found who, though they could not contribute funds, might render most valuable assistance, and be easily supported from the common stock. How many females there are around us left solitary in the world, without any home for their

affections, any definite object for their labours, any community of interest or of feeling with their neighbours, any legitimate vent for zeal and energy, who, with the loss of those external appliances by which the world measures respectability, lose their own self-respect, or, in the absence of directions from the Church, throw their religious and devotional warmth into channels even of heresy and of schism! What a blessing it would be to such minds to have a home prepared for them, where the old might retire to a holy rest and preparation for the grave, nursed with a sisterly care, and devoted to meditation and prayer, and the younger might be trained in the discipline of a holy obedience and a modest activity, living under rule, and sheltered from the vanities and temptations of a life without dignity and without duty."

And as Bevan said this he looked up in Villiers's face, and observed that he was engaged deeply in thought.

At last Villiers observed, "I have often admired that little grey gabelled building which adjoins Mrs. Bevan's house. Whom does it belong to?"

"It is the remains," replied Bevan, "of an old institution, not unlike the one which we have been sketching out—a sort of *béguinage*. The old archway which led into it is still standing, and there are several windows with the stone mullions perfect, only blocked up with brick. The very chapel is remaining in a back yard; but it is now turned into a cow-house. It was destroyed at the Reformation."

"And the river runs close by it, does it not?" said Villiers, "through that meadow with the large elms in it, just under the churchyard?"

"Yes," replied Bevan. "I suppose the site was chosen from its closeness to the church, that the

inmates might be able to attend the service regularly."

"And you think," said Villiers, smiling, "that Miss Brook would make a suitable inmate of such an establishment? Where can we find a head?"

And once more Bevan looked up; for there was an evident meaning in Villiers's words beyond the mere question. "I know one," he said, "who would gladly devote herself to such a work, if properly commenced, and sanctioned by the heads of the Church."

"Do you mean Mrs. Bevan?" asked Villiers.

Bevan bowed assent.

"Such an institution might prove a blessed refuge," continued Villiers, "to many of the sufferers at Hawkstone at this moment. When I think what an awful, and what a sweeping calamity has fallen upon the place, I am almost tempted to think that it must have been the scene of some dreadful sin. The lightnings do not fall, except where there is something to attract them."

"It has been the scene," replied Bevan, "for years and years, of a neglect of God—of coldness and apathy, at least, to his honour and glory. It has been haunted by heresy and schism; and heresy and schism have led to a refusal of the just means of supporting the public worship of the Church, to the withdrawal of tithes and offerings, and to the contempt of God's ministers. And where these crimes have been committed, we have the voice of the Bible itself declaring that a curse will fall. And we have added to these sins the sins of civil licentiousness, of disobedience to rulers, and of contempt of authority. And upon this we have heaped other crimes—pride, arrogance, covetousness, trampling on the poor, hardheartedness, defrauding the hireling of his wages, boasting of our strength and

knowledge, and of the multitude of our riches ; thinking that no want or punishment could reach us ; vaunting our enlightenment, dishonouring our parents, tampering with divine truth, sacrificing our creed and our Church to human policy and worldly intrigue. Is not this sufficient to account for such a punishment ? Where such attraction as this exists, could the lightning do otherwise than fall ? And will it not fall soon upon the whole of England, unless it repents of the same guilt ? ”

Villiers sighed deeply.

“ And when,” continued Bevan, “ our unhappy friend Bentley, as alive as we are to these sins and these perils, had devoted himself to correct and remove them, he thought to move the mountain by his single arm ; and rather increased the evil than diminished it by setting forth self-will and lawlessness in religion as a cure for self-will and lawlessness in all other things. He, also, has met his fate.”

“ And no more tidings, then, have been heard of him ? ” asked Villiers, mournfully.

“ None,” replied Bevan. “ He left his lodgings the day before yesterday, sending word to his housekeeper that he should not return. He must have gone out of the town early after daybreak, or, even before. Indeed, he had been so insulted and assailed with the most coarse and virulent abuse, that I can well understand his wishing to quit it unobserved. He took leave of me the night before in the most affectionate manner, and charged me to give you what I have already brought you, his small Bible, as the only token which he could send of his gratitude and reverence toward you. And though he did not tell me what he contemplated, I could perceive that he had resolved on taking some

step of the kind, and on leaving the place for a time, until the storm should blow over. Indeed, I recommended him myself to go to his friends. But he has no parents living."

"Poor man!" said Villiers; "what a cruel position to be placed in, and how hopeless! What will be his fate?"

"To become an outcast from society," replied Bevan, "a branded disgrace to his profession, a beggar, perhaps, in the streets, or, at the best, to drag on in some unknown corner of the earth, a desolate, destitute existence — trembling at every rumour, and shrinking from every eye, till he finds a refuge from misery and shame only in the grave. No shelter is open in our Church for such a case, no homes in this country, which, when a father and mother desert us, may take us up, and rescue us from the cruelty and mockery of the world, in the name of the father and of the mother of us all. Alas! poor England!"

"We must endeavour to trace him," said Villiers. "Perhaps, even now, some refuge of the kind might be provided for him. Let us not despair." And Villiers took up a roll of drawings which lay before him, and proceeded with Bevan to examine the plans for restoring the Priory of Hawkstone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FEW days afterwards Villiers knocked at the door of an elegant modern house in one of the principal streets of London. The door was opened by a portly butler in purple livery, attended by two other domestics, who bore evident marks of the hospitality of the servants' hall, and not less of the effects and temptations of a London life upon that class of domestics. Villiers was ushered up a broad well-carpeted flight of steps into an elegantly furnished drawing-room. A lady with several daughters were sitting there—one at the harp, another at the piano, another at an embroidery frame, destined for a gorgeous gilt ottoman which stood in the centre of the apartment. Morning visitors were engaged in discussing the dinner party of yesterday, and the ball of the approaching night. Tickets lay on the table for the Ancient Concert, and various other places of amusement. Mixed with china dishes and elegant bijoux, were scattered the latest parliamentary pamphlets, and a variety of religious works ; and in one corner, on a small table, lay a manual of family devotion. One picture occupied the wall over the fireplace, and it represented a very pleasing, gentlemanly, well-dressed man, seated on a sofa at an elegant writing-table, one leg thrown carelessly over the other, and his pen balanced gracefully in his hand, while before him lay open a letter addressed to the Right Reverend Father in God the Lord Bishop of F——.

The bishop himself, as the lady informed Villiers,

was at that moment engaged — indeed, every moment of his time was occupied. The old Bishop of M — was so infirm, that his diocese had been wholly neglected, till parliament had appointed the Bishop of F — to take charge of it; and the Bishop of F —, having already an enormous diocese of his own, containing more than a million of souls, and occupied chiefly by a manufacturing population, had vainly remonstrated against this increased burden. The post, as the lady continued to observe, brought him such a multitude of letters, that half the day was occupied in answering them. His secretary scarcely found time to take exercise; and just now the new principles and opinions reviving in the Church caused so many difficulties, and required such nice considerations and adjustments, that in the Bishop's anxiety to support his conscientious clergymen, to guide the doubtful, to repress the hasty, and to satisfy all, he had involved himself in the disputes of twenty-four parishes; and at last, worn out with the insults which he had encountered from one class, and the indiscretions committed by another, he had been attacked by a serious illness, from which he was only just recovering.

The young ladies were preparing to engage Villiers's interest in a more light and agreeable discussion of the merits of a new French novel, which lay open on the table, when the portly butler opened the drawing-room door, and his lordship himself appeared. Villiers was a man of too much importance to be received as ordinary visiters, or his clergy. And to the profound, filial, and almost awful reverence, with which Villiers stood before him, as if to receive his blessing, the kind, amiable, and courteous bishop responded with a politeness and deference, which disturbed and perplexed

Villiers, he scarcely knew why. He apologised for having detained Villiers so long, assured him that he had been obliged to dismiss four curates who were waiting in London to see him, and proceeded to the usual topics of conversation in a morning visit. And it was only when Villiers apologised for intruding on time so important, and requested a private audience on business of some moment, that his lordship conducted him to his library. It was a large lofty room, looking out on the smoky back court of a London house, full of papers, reports, letters, documents, pamphlets, plans, subscription-lists; but it contained no books. The bishop had no time to read: he was an elegant scholar, a sound divine; but study was now impossible. The secretary, who was writing at a side-table, was dismissed. And every five minutes the door-bell rang, and one after another the butler announced, that in the next room was waiting the Reverend Mr. Darling, to consult his lordship on the conduct of his Unitarian churchwarden; the churchwardens of Ringold, to complain of their clergyman for reviving the offertory: the Reverend Mr. Montague, a deacon just ordained, and placed alone in a cure of three thousand souls, to request advice respecting the burial of an unbaptized Dissenter; the archdeacon, to deliberate with his bishop on the use of the surplice in the pulpit; the secretary of the Christian Knowledge Society, to submit some tracts for his approval; a deputation of dissenting ministers, to request him to accept the patronage of a Bible Society; besides the bishop's steward, with the accounts of a newly-dropped fine; and the chairman of the Benevolent Institution, to solicit him to preach a sermon in its behalf. Still the bishop, only once looking at his watch, resolved to devote at least a quarter of an hour to a man

of such excellence, influence, and importance as Villiers. And Villiers, though he feared that little could be done in such a space, endeavoured to explain his plans with respect to Hawkstone, and to obtain his lordship's approbation and support, and, what Villiers still more desired, his superintending and controlling hand. But the quarter of an hour had elapsed before Villiers could even approach the principal part of the communication which he wished to make. And with real regret the bishop heard his servant announce that the carriage was at the door, which was to take him to the House of Lords to a committee of privileges. He offered Villiers a seat in it, that he might continue the conversation; but Villiers thought it better to wait for a more favourable opportunity. And the hour when the bishop was engaged to the committee of privileges was the same at which Villiers himself had been always accustomed, when in London, to attend the afternoon service in Westminster Abbey. He congratulated himself that, as a layman, he could enjoy a blessing, from which even the heads of the Church were excluded by the pressure of business. And the bishop, kindly shaking him by the hand, and wishing that he could find in his diocese many more such laymen, and at the same time wondering and half-doubting whether or not Villiers himself was a safe man, and uninfected with Oxford extravagances, requested him to communicate freely with his archdeacon, and promised that as soon as the pressure of business was removed (when this was to happen he could not foresee) he would give attention to his valuable plan.

It was with a chilled and heavy heart that Villiers took his leave of the amiable man, the elegant scholar, the sincere Christian, the intelligent, active, zealous ruler of his diocese, who, but for that pres-

sure of business which absorbed even the hours of devotion, and secularised even his elevated mind, might have proved an angel and apostle of the Church. But his thoughts reverted to Hawkstone, and he suffered them to become fixed on its state, its prospects, and his own duties connected with it, till he found that he had reached the abbey.

That night Villiers had a dream. He thought that he was on his way to see the good bishop, and to beseech his guidance and control, as a son would ask for counsel from a father. But instead of the streets of London, he fancied himself in an ancient, silent, and almost deserted city—loaded, as it were, with heavy, quaint, overhanging houses, mixed here and there with old carved stone portals and sculptured gateways. There were high stone walls, grey and lichened with age; richly wrought churches, standing each in its quiet churchyard; old massive mansions with court-yards and groves around them; low modest almshouses and hospitals clustered round silent cloisters, dim with shade, but sweet with flowers; and, in the midst, embosomed in a tall grove of limes, above which the rooks were cawing and soaring like a cloud, rose the vast, solemn, gigantic towers of an ancient cathedral. He fancied that he passed down the solemn avenue of limes, with the tombstones gleaming tranquilly on each side; the low deep portals of the venerable pile were open, and Villiers reverently entered; and as he entered he thought the organ pealed forth its solemn volumes, and from one of the side aisles appeared a train of white-robed worshippers, a choir of boys, a procession of priests, and then one bearing on high a cross, and another with a crosier, behind whom followed slowly, with eyes cast down, and hands folded on the breast, the same good

bishop from whom he had parted in the morning. There was the same lofty brow, the same benevolent eye, the same dignity and benignity of mien. But there was something else: Villiers felt, but could not describe it,—a shade, a tone of spiritual life, thrown over his whole demeanour, as if his very being were tinged and coloured with hours of prayer, of fasting, of meditation, of study, of holy peace and patient suffering, and fruitful labour. The beautiful ritual of the church was chanted forth, but by the whole congregation, not by a paid choir only. And when the blessing had been pronounced from the throne, and the little procession was winding its way back through the long-drawn aisles, there ranged themselves on each side the poor, the aged, the widows, the young, the children of the schools, and not a few of the wealthy inhabitants of the city, looking for a repetition of the same blessing, as from their venerated father, as he passed.

Villiers thought that the good bishop saw him, and beckoned him to follow. And when the procession had reached a massive deep-arched gateway, the bishop dismissed all but his attendant clergy, and taking Villiers by the hand, led him into a lofty refectory. A table was spread, simple almost to frugality. The bishop seated himself at the head; and beneath him were ranged twelve clergymen in a priestly dress, who were the hands, the ears, and the eyes by which he swayed his diocese, and who never left him. Strangers also and invited guests were there, for the bishop's palace was the centre of hospitality to the whole diocese. And the clergy, when they visited the city, never were compelled to frequent an inn. But there was one table filled with poor, and other tables occupied by young students, whom the bishop, with the assistance of his chaplains, was rearing up, as in a nursery

for the Church. And instead of liveried lacqueys, the little services required were administered by a few quiet and simple attendants, themselves in grave attire, and who seemed to be recognised and treated rather as brethren than as servants. A solemn grace was chanted, a portion of Scripture read, and then with sober cheerfulness all were welcomed to a meal, from which every needless luxury was scrupulously excluded, and every needful comfort plentifully provided. And there was grave and even solemn talk, chastened with benignity and courtesy. And Villiers thought that the bishop led him on to speak of his own plans and wishes; and when the repast was over brought him into his own apartment, undecorated, unluxurious, but filled with books, and furnished for prayer. And there he listened to the young man's petitions for aid, and his inquiries for wisdom. And he intermixed his questions with answers, now warning, now checking, now advising, now encouraging, and with promises of aid and counsel whenever it should be required. And when Villiers was about to withdraw, he thought the holy man bade him kneel down, and raising his hands to heaven, implored a blessing upon his head, and the comfort of God's Holy Spirit in all his works.

But Villiers was wakened from his dream by the rolling of a carriage, which stopped at the house adjoining the hotel, and which house was the palace of the bishop of F——. It was the bishop's agreeable daughters returning from a London party.

CHAPTER XIX.

AND now once more, and for the last time, we may pass over a space of about eight years, and at the expiration of that time we may place ourselves in front of the Blake Arms Inn at Howlas, and observe how the house has been restored and enlarged, and more accommodation provided for commercial gentlemen, their gigs and their horses. Mr. Bonsor also is still there, and his bustling wife, and even Mary the maid ; but her services in the commercial room have been supplanted by those of a waiter, for Howlas from a straggling wilderness of houses has swelled into an enormous town, black, dirty, filled with vice, and misery, and poverty, and surrounded by a forest of chimneys vomiting smoke, and of iron-works flaming, and grinding, and roaring, and of coal-pits absorbing in the bowels of the earth half the population each day, and disgorging them again at night, like naked demons, exhausted with labour, and ghastly with crime. Near to it also have arisen a number of vast, many-windowed fabrics, lighted up like palaces all night long, to celebrate not the orgies of pleasure, not the solemnities of worship, but the tortures of midnight labour. Mr. Smith is the owner of one, to which he has removed his establishment from Hawkstone ; and the dammed-up mountain stream, or rather, torrent, which supplied the Hawkstone river, indicates that its manufacturing importance is duly appreciated.

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A horn is heard at the end of the street, and though there are no less than three other inns, or as they call themselves, hotels, in the place, Mr. Bonsor's activity and Villiers's constant patronage and support have given to the Blake Arms the means of standing its ground, so that one of the four omnibuses which ply to the new railway station always sets down passengers at the door. The horn which we hear indicates an arrival of the kind; and if we do not mind waiting a few minutes at the door, watching the movements of some anxious-looking policemen, who are endeavouring to disperse a knot of sulky, ill-looking mechanics at the corner of the street, we may be enabled to witness the arrival. The first who descends from the vehicle is a stout, close-shaven, sinister-looking person, respectably dressed in black, and bearing in his whole appearance that singular indescribable aspect of mystery and intrigue which is too often found connected with the looks of the worst specimens of Romish ecclesiastics. Notwithstanding the impassive, iron-like expression of his countenance, he cannot prevent a slight quiver from disturbing his muscles as he seems to recognise the house; and he even asks if there is no other inn; but Mr. Bonsor comes up to him invitingly, though not without anxiety in his countenance; and the stranger follows him, though reluctantly, into the house and asks for a private room, and into this he is followed by a companion.

To this companion we must now request the especial attention of the reader. He was young, scarcely more than about nineteen years of age, but tall, well-formed, graceful in his movements, so far as a natural instinct and elegance has not been suppressed and destroyed by habitual association with evil. His dress was decent, but foreign; his hair

fair and glossy, curled thick over an open forehead; his nose, his chin, the curves of his lips and of his eyebrows, were all delicately drawn by nature. A slight and premature moustache gave him the aspect of a foreigner,—of one, at least, who had been living in a foreign country. And youth would indeed have been beautiful in him, but for the coarse lines and swollen features which, even thus early, indicated familiarity with vice. The elder of the two travellers, having carefully deposited on a table a writing-case elaborately strapped and buckled, and having bidden the younger see that their carpet-bags were safely removed from the omnibus, closed the door, examined some cupboards which were in the room, tried the lock of a door which opened into another apartment, even looked searchingly under the sofa, and then seated himself before the fire-place, and, with his feet raised upon the fender, proceeded to meditate. His thoughts apparently were not of the most agreeable nature, for his brow worked convulsively, and his lips at times even quivered; but on the return of his young companion he started up, and resumed his usual composure, though he could not suppress a glance of contempt, followed by a malignant satisfaction, when the young man rang the bell, and ordered brandy and water, which he swallowed greedily, and then with a coarse and blasphemous oath bade the waiter leave the room.

“And so you are going down to Hawkstone to-night,” asked the young man, after a pause. “When shall you be back? and what am I to do in the mean time?”

“Drink yourself drunk, I suppose,” answered the elder, with a sneer.

The young man only laughed, and uttered another oath.

“And what in the world are you going to do here?” he said again, turning from the window. “What a mystery you are making of all this! Look there,” he cried; “what is the meaning of those policemen and this mob coming up the street? And why are all the windows of these shops blocked up?” And with the impetuosity of a mind delighting in excitement, however vicious, he would have rushed into the street, but Pearce (for he it was) seized him and held him fast. “You must stay here,” he said; “if you were to go out, you might ruin all.”

“Ruin what?” asked the young man. “Here you are again at your mysteries! Of all mysterious men I ever met with, you are the worst. You have brought me all the way from Lyons without telling me what you are about. And then you leave me in this filthy place. I tell you what, Mr. Pearce, I must know something more of your proceedings, or you will not find me so compliant as I have been.”

Pearce, though a little alarmed at the bold and resolute tone of his companion, looked on him sternly and contemptuously, as if endeavouring to crush his resistance at once; but the young man met his gaze fixedly—and even Pearce was obliged to withdraw his eye. “You may do as you like, Master Ernest,” said Pearce; “it matters little to me. I have been your friend through life, when every one else had deserted you. But for me you would have starved; and it is in my power, as I have told you again and again, to make you a great man, and richer than you have any notion of. But unless you choose to put yourself into my hands, and do whatever I command, you may go back into the streets, and beg your bread.”

And Pearce was preparing to leave the room, but the young man stopped him.

"When shall you be back, then?" he asked.

"Perhaps to-morrow," answered Pearce; "perhaps not for a week."

"And, I suppose, I am to remain here," replied the young man sulkily.

"Yes," answered Pearce, "If you do what I bid you, and wish me to be of any use to you, you will remain here quietly till I return, or send for you."

"And what am I to do for money," asked the other.

Pearce went to the table and opened his desk to take out some sovereigns, but as he was stooping over it, the young man threw himself upon him with a sudden spring and ferocious oath. "Mr. Pearce," he exclaimed, "I will see what there is in that desk of yours; you shall show me that packet of papers. I will not be trifled with any more."

But, active and vigorous, and determined as the youth was, Pearce was too robust and resolute to be taken by surprise; and with a sudden effort he shook his assailant from him, threw him to the other end of the room, locked his desk calmly, and took it under his arm.

"It will not do," he said to the disappointed and passionate youth; "It will not do. Make up your mind to obey me, or I give you up. The papers are not in that desk, even if you had got possession of it. Do you think I am such a fool as to risk the loss of them in that way?"

The youth muttered something sullenly, but Pearce took no notice of it.

"And what am I to do here?" asked the youth. "You told me when we came away from Lyons that I should find plenty to do here; and that I need not enlist, if I wanted to have a more stirring life than you kept me to in France. There is no fighting going on here, is there, as there was the

last time? Is not this the very house they burned down then?"

Pearce said nothing.

"I wonder what became of that gentleman," asked the youth, "whom they wanted to get at, and tear to pieces then? I wonder if he is alive still? I shall not forget his dragging me out of the fire, down there in Hawkstone; and though I was but a mere boy, I remember I would have done the same thing for him, and have given him the ladder when he cried out for it in this very house, out of the garret window, only you boxed my ears, and pulled me away."

Pearce still continued silent.

"Is there any more of that work going on," asked the young man, "that you have come up here in this underhand way—writing letters, and receiving them every day, and going about in all sorts of strange figures? Are you going to have a rebellion? Is there to be any fighting, Mr. Pearce, once for all? Answer me that."

"And do you want to fight?" asked Pearce, quietly.

"Anything for a stirring life," replied the young man; "anything rather than be moping about doing nothing. I want to see life, instead of being penned and cooped up as I have been."

"Perhaps," replied Pearce, "there may be more chances of fighting here than you think for; and more means of seeing life, and of getting on in life, too, for a young man of spirit."

"I wish I could find them," said the youth. But he was interrupted by Mr. Bonsor coming into the room with a frightened countenance, and requesting that they would remove into a back room, and allow him to put up the shutters. "A mob," he said, "had collected in the market-place, and was coming

up the street; and the policemen were not strong enough to disperse them, and soldiers had been sent for: and if there should be any disturbance, it might not be safe to be on the ground-floor, particularly if shots were fired, as they had been three days before, when two men had been killed."

"A mob!" exclaimed the young man, "fighting! soldiers! that's capital, just the thing!" And once more he would have rushed out of the room, but Pearce stopped him, without expressing the slightest surprise at the news, or making any further inquiries of Bonsor, who, nevertheless, without encouragement, except from the younger of the two travellers, proceeded to enlarge on the turbulent and alarming state of the district—an outbreak expected every day—special constables sworn in—Mr. Villiers's yeomanry ordered out—a regiment of cavalry and three pieces of artillery sent down to Hakewell barracks—and the same state of things in other parts of England,—every thing full of terror and confusion. And there were, at the same time, pending quarrels and negotiations which threatened a war with France; and Ireland was organised under its priests, ready to take part in any rebellious movement, or foreign invasion. The young man, Mr. Ernest, as we may call him, cast his eye upon a dirty newspaper which lay upon the table, and read out some paragraphs to the same effect; but Pearce paid no attention to them.

"I suspect," said Ernest at last to his companion, "that you know more about these things than you are willing to tell every one."

"It may be," replied Pearce, "and it may not."

"And what kind of fellows are they," continued the young man, "who are preparing for this fun?"

"Very fine fellows," replied Pearce.

"Do you know any of them?" asked Ernest.

But Pearce made no reply.

At last he said, "And if you were to know any thing of them, what would you do?"

"Join with them and fight, to be sure," replied Ernest.

"Fight for what?" asked Pearce, curiously.

"For any thing," replied Ernest; "for fun, for the mere pleasure of fighting. What were one's arms made for — a gentleman's arms, that is? (and you tell me I am a gentleman) — not to work upon the roads, or to sit all day at a spinning-jenny."

"You would make a fine soldier," observed Pearce, "if you had not been intended for something better. But now you must come with me; and if you do as I tell you, there is no saying what you may find yourself some fine day. Do you intend to trust to me or not?"

"I suppose I must," answered the youth sulkily. "But I must have some money to amuse me. I often wonder where you get all your money from, Mr. Pearce."

Pearce, however, made no answer, but put on his great-coat, and taking his writing-case under his arm, he made a sign for Ernest to accompany him. "We must go out the back way, I suppose, if there is a mob in the street." And though his companion stopped, and listened anxiously to the shouts and tumult which now reached them from the advancing mob, and would willingly have rushed into the middle of the fray, Pearce took him by the arm, and led him reluctantly into the back court-yard, and through the garden gate.

"All built up again, I see, since the fire," said his companion. "I remember every place as well as if it was yesterday. There is the very wall I climbed over, and here is the wood-house, and the

cistern into which the gentleman nearly tumbled. I cannot recollect what his name was; can you?"

But Pearce hurried on without answering: and after passing through the garden, he led the way up by a by-lane, and at last stopped before a high whitewashed wall, in which was a narrow door. He knocked, and it was opened from the inside. Pearce, stepping in, said a few words in French to the person within, and then called to Ernest to enter; and, though the young man hesitated for a moment, and showed signs of doubt and reluctance, Pearce, with an authoritative voice, overpowered the suspicion which came to his mind, and they both entered, and the door once more closed upon them.

The same evening, a few hours after this, there was seen standing near the ancient Priory, under Prior Silkstede's oak, and gazing curiously on the scene around him, a sturdy mendicant, habited as one who had travelled a long journey on foot, and could second his petition for alms with a moving and plausible tale of distress, whether it was the loss of all his little property by fire, or a murrain among his cattle, or a hardhearted landlord. He had a rough crab-tree stick in his hand, and a dirty, well-thumbed, and well-signed petition in his pocket. His black shaggy hair disguised much of his features; but those who had observed the twinkling, cunning, malignant, but powerful eyes of Mr. Pearce would have found little difficulty in recognising him again, even in his present habiliments. And, as he gazed on the scene before him, a dark scowl gathered on his brow, and his teeth ground together in passion.

And yet the landscape in itself was not one to call up such feelings in any ordinary spectator. It was exquisitely beautiful—cheerful, and yet solemn.

In the bottom of that wooded dell, and on the brink of the huddling brook, which fretted and foamed along under the rough-scarped sandstone bank, hung with huge gnarled oaks, and carpeted with fern and moss, stood the pile, no longer in ruins, of the ancient Priory of Hawkstone. A hand of exquisite taste and feeling had restored it to its original state, as nearly as was consistent with the purposes to which it was now applied. There was the quadrangle surrounded with its low buildings, appropriated to the chambers of its inmates; and every mullioned window, and clustered chimney, and jutting buttress, and sculptured corbel, bore the impress of a master's art. On one side rose the tower, massive, simple, and grey, and relieved by the rich oriel which projected over the gateway, and by a delicately-carved niche, surmounted with a rich-wrought canopy. On the right was the hall, lighted with tall narrow windows, and crowned with its *louvre*. And up to it led a porch, with a rich but low-browed arch, and flight of broad stone steps, about which ivy and creepers were already twining, and tinting the grey stone with the colours of age. At one angle stood a slender turret, perforated at the top with narrow open lancets, and from this, at the moment when the mendicant was gazing on the pile, a silvery bell was ringing to call the inmates of the edifice to their evening repast. To the south the quadrangle was open, and admitted the bright warm sunshine into a cloister green with honeysuckle and sweet briar; and at one end of this cloister a narrow archway opened into the chapel, which rose high over the rest of the buildings, with its grove of leafy pinnacles, and its tower, gracefully proportioned, crowning the whole as with a diadem. The mendicant gazed on it, and again he ground his teeth in passion. But

his attention was called away by the appearance of an old but respectable peasant in a green old age, the same who had met Villiers the first day of his arrival at the Priory, under Lady Esther's pine-trees. He asked the usual questions of the beggar, who answered them plausibly, and satisfactorily, and as one who had known better days; and the old peasant became communicative.

"If you want relief," he said, "you have only to go to the great gate and tell your tale, and if they are satisfied with it, you will be welcome to a meal and a lodging for the night. No poor man goes away from it without help, if he seems to deserve it. And they are not hard in examining you. Mr. Villiers is not hard either. Many a time has he told me that he would rather relieve three rogues than refuse to relieve one honest man. We call this our Hawkstone poor-house — a very different one from those you see elsewhere!"

"And is it Mr. Villiers who has built this?" asked the mendicant.

The peasant nodded his head.

"And who lives here?" asked the mendicant.

"There are twelve gentlemen," answered the peasant — "clergymen most of them. And there is a head — the warden they call him. Mr. Beattie is his name. And they have often other gentlemen staying with them, mostly clergymen; but some of them Mr. Villiers's friends, lords and others, who come here to read and be quiet, generally about Lent time. And there are a number of other young gentlemen who are going to be clergymen. And there is a school; and they do a wonderful deal of good."

"And are they liked?" asked Pearce, significantly. "They are Papists, are they not?"

"Papists!" exclaimed the peasant; "no more

than you and I are Papists. People tried at one time to persuade us they were; but we soon found out the difference. But if you want some supper you had better make haste, for the supper-bell is down."

The mendicant hesitated. At last he summoned up courage, and composing his countenance, and preparing his tale, he ventured boldly up to the porter's lodge under the entrance-tower. One of the Fellows (Villiers had chosen the name as less likely than that of brothers to shock prejudices by unfounded associations with monasticism) happened to be at the gate as he approached, and having listened kindly to his story, he called the porter to bring water for the beggar to wash his hands, and then conducted him himself into the hall. Its lofty, dark-raftered roof, slightly relieved by carving, and its deep-mullioned windows enlivened here and there by the escutcheons of a benefactor or a bishop, were lighted up at this moment with the last rays of the setting sun. There was a raised dais, at which were seated about twenty of the elder inmates, all dressed alike, and in gowns of a black stuff. At the head of them Pearce, even at that distance of time, recognised Beattie, and afraid of being recognised himself, notwithstanding his disguise, he gladly slunk to the end of a table in the centre of the hall, at which were seated twelve poor people like himself. It was one of the principles of Hawkstone Priory to partake of no meal without sharing it with some of their poorer neighbours.

A simple but substantial supper was served up to him, during which Pearce looked round and observed the other tables filled with scholars, attired in gowns like the companions. And even Pearce was affected with their quietness, propriety, and re-

verential manner. The attendants also, he observed, were habited like the rest, though in coarser gowns, and were treated more as associates in the same community than as hirelings and servants. The meal over, a simple but solemn grace in Latin was chanted from the high table, and closed with a full and swelling Amen from the whole body ; and the warden, followed by the rest, two and two, proceeded to leave the hall. He stopped to say a few words of kindness to a poor old man, who had been seated next to the mendicant, and he made some inquiries of the mendicant himself ; but with all Pearce's power of dissimulation, he could scarcely answer them coolly. And Beattie could not help remarking to a gentleman, who walked at his right hand, on the sinister expression of the beggar's countenance. The gentleman turned and looked back on him, and his eyes met those of the mendicant, which lighted up with an expression of intense hatred, as they gazed upon the countenance of Villiers. Villiers himself felt a strange indescribable sensation thrill through him, and waken, as it were, a whole train of old and strange associations, which transported him to a distant clime, and almost absorbed the consciousness of the objects before him. But he had long since schooled himself to reject from his thoughts whatever might tend to occupy him with vain regrets, and morbid imaginations. And though night after night his dreams brought back to him the image of his wife and of his child, and he never knelt in prayer without one fervent and tearful petition, that, if Heaven so willed, the lost might still be restored to him, he never permitted himself to indulge day-dreams. He cast one more look, he knew not why, at the mendicant, but the mendicant had averted his head, and Villiers then followed Beattie to his own apartments.

“And now,” he said, when the door had closed, and Beattie had been seated, by Villiers’s own hand, in his massive abbatial chair,—“now I can communicate to you the object of my coming, before the bell rings for chapel. He is found at last. Let us be thankful.”

“Who is found?” asked Beattie.

“Our poor lost friend, Bentley,” answered Villiers. “But I will read you the letter which I received this morning. And we must lose no time in sending or going to him, and bringing him here. It comes from Carrington, up in the most remote part of Durham; and I have heard something of the writer, who is the clergyman of the parish.”

Beattie composed himself to hear, and Villiers proceeded to read the letter:—

“SIR,

“I am sure you will excuse the liberty which I am taking in addressing you. The interest which you have yourself shown in the unhappy person who is the subject of my letter, will sufficiently excuse me. I am the rector of the parish of Carrington, in the north of Durham; and as such have been made acquainted with a case of the deepest distress. About eight years since, a gentleman, evidently of education and superior manners, but seemingly without means of supporting himself, came into this parish. He took a very small room in a cottage near to the church, and for some time secluded himself wholly from observation, rarely appearing out of doors till dusk, and shunning every communication even with the poor widow, in whose cottage he lodged. From her I learned, after a time, that his means appeared to be exhausted. He was punctual in his attendance at Church on every occasion, but studiously placed himself out of the

sight of the congregation, in the lowest and worst seats among the poor; and the piety, yet deep dejection, and shame, and remorse, which were visible in his manner, could not fail to interest me. For some time I observed that he never attended at the Holy Communion. At last, once or twice, I saw him lingering and hesitating, when the rest of the congregation was departing; and I made another effort to see him, calling on him, and addressing him when we met, as we sometimes did meet, in our walks; but he evinced such decided reserve and reluctance to hold any communication with me, that I was obliged to give up the attempt, and to wait for a more favourable opportunity. He did, however, at last, and apparently with a great effort, present himself at the holy table; and I shall never forget the intense expression of awe and misery, and yet of hope, with which he bowed his head down to receive the sacred elements. It affected me so much that I could not refrain from following him to his miserable home after the service was concluded; and, without wearying you with details, it is sufficient to say, that, touched and penetrated with holy influences, and encouraged by the sympathy which I felt for him, he communicated to me, under a promise of inviolable secrecy, so much of his unhappy story as he felt himself at liberty to explain. That person was the Rev. Mr. Bentley, about eight years since the curate of Hawkstone, and whom, by his own account, you yourself had rescued about that time from a situation of great danger. He told me partially the circumstances under which he had been involved in that danger, and his history after it. You are aware that advantage was taken, partly by public scandal, and partly, it would seem, by the agency of personal enemies, to calumniate his character in

the grossest manner; and unable to refute the charges, in consequence of the insanity of the poor woman to whose defence he was sacrificed, and involved also in an appearance of mystery, owing to his rigid conscientiousness in observing his unhappy oath, you are also aware that he was unable to withstand the storm, and abandoned his post. Although his bishop expressed himself satisfied with his innocence, he was unable to protect, or even to exculpate him in the eyes of the world. His friends received him with a coldness and suspicion so galling, that he resolved to submit to any sacrifice rather than remain in dependance upon them; and he fled here, to this remote and lonely village, not to live (for he had no means of living), but to sink in silence into the grave under the fearful curse of a blighted fame.

“After this communication my intercourse with him became frequent; but it was admitted by him only under a solemn pledge from me that I would not betray his residence to his friends. And, though I endeavoured to impress on him that an oath illegally exacted was not binding, I found that, like many other persons brought up in his views of religion, while there was considerable laxity in some points of moral obligation, there was in others an over-scrupulous and superstitious conscientiousness, which nothing could overcome. Nor indeed, as it appeared, was it possible for him to remove wholly the suspicions which naturally attached to certain circumstances in the case.

“My own means were so small that I could only assist him by procuring for him a few pupils—the children of neighbouring farmers, whom he instructed in reading and writing; and in this manner he earned a scanty pittance, scarcely sufficient to support him. But from the moment when he had

opened himself to me, and we were enabled to associate together more freely, a great load seemed to be taken from his mind ; and everything which I have witnessed in him has more and more confirmed my conviction of his innocence and uprightness. The last seven years have been spent by him in the patient endurance of poverty, and privations, and solitude ; and if Providence had not enabled him to open his mind to a brother clergyman, I think he must long since have sunk under his sufferings. As it is, his distresses have brought upon him a painful and lingering disorder, which wholly incapacitates him from any exertion whatever ; and after toiling to the last moment, and sinking under it, he has now been obliged to abandon even the little means of support which enabled him to drag out his existence. During all this time not a murmur has escaped him. He has permitted me at last, and with the deepest reluctance, to make known his situation to some relatives—surviving parents he has none. But the replies which I have received have been such as to preclude all hope of assistance. Some few alms I have been enabled to procure for him ; but these have now failed : and when I look round I can see no shelter open for him—no place of retirement, where, if guilty, he might pass his few remaining days in penitence ; or, if innocent, be shielded from the calumnies of the world, and the miseries of destitution. For our clergy, as for our peasantry, we have provided in this country no other refuge, in want, in sorrow, in oppression, in solitude, and sickness, and old age, but the poor-house and the gaol. Happily I have prevailed on him at last to allow me to mention his circumstances to yourself ; and from all that I have heard of your character ——”

But here Villiers hastily folded up the letter.

"It is not money that is wanted," said Beattie, after a pause. "No money could purchase the aids and consolations which he requires ; and his is not an uncommon case. Other things besides calumny will drive men from their post, strip them of their support, plunge them in poverty, leave them, like a wreck upon the waters, to be tossed about, and dashed to pieces on the rocks, like worthless and senseless fragments of society. Alas ! how true it is. For our clergy, as for our peasantry — rather let us say, for every class of society — we have provided in this country no other refuge in want, in sorrow, in oppression, in solitude, and sickness, and old age, but the poor-house and the goal."

"He must be brought here immediately," said Villiers. "You can receive him at once, can you not?"

"Of course," replied Beattie. But the deep-toned bell of the chapel, which had been tolling for some little time, now paused ; and together the two friends, the founder of the college and the warden, proceeded to the hall.

"I have just arranged," said Beattie, "that we should all meet here before we go into the chapel, and return here after the service is finished. With so many young boys under our care, we cannot guard too carefully against their entering upon their devotions in a hurried, unprepared frame of mind. I do not like their coming into the chapel immediately from their play or lessons, and still less making their attendance at chapel a roll-call." And Villiers, whose admiration for Beattie increased each day as he saw him bringing all his judgment and devotion to bear upon the formation of this new institution, was delighted to find that all the inmates were already assembled in the hall, each in his

place—grave, and composed, and silent; and after a short prayer against wandering thoughts and irreverent behaviour, they all proceeded to the chapel.

Whatever holy, peaceful, grateful thoughts—thoughts of deepest gratitude even in the midst of heavy afflictions—pervaded the minds of others, in the breast of one individual, during nearly the whole of that solemn service, there raged a hell. Placed with other poor at the upper end of the sacred building (Beattie had selected the place to mark in some outward form the fact that the poor are in an especial manner the children of the Church), he looked down the lofty vaulted aisle, reverently but not gorgeously lighted, and lined on each side with rows of the members of the body, both young and old, attired (for it was the evening of a festival) in white surplices. He saw Beattie take the usual seat on the right hand of the entrance, under a richly-wrought canopy of dark carved oak, and Villiers next to him. And when he observed the deep and solemn devotion of Villiers's manner during the whole of the service, his heart misgave him; and he doubted whether any machinations which he could contrive against such a man could ever be permitted to take effect. There was a full choral service, in which all the congregation joined; for church music formed an essential part of the system which Beattie had drawn up for the course of instruction: and as the full swell of the organ, blended with the clear pure chorus of voices, young and old, rose in a cloud of music into the vaulted roof, and floated along it, almost like the songs of angels, even the guilty, remorseless, vindictive spirit of the supposed mendicant lost something of its bitterness, and became more calm. The beautiful service of the Church was concluded, the organ once more

pealed forth its full tide of harmony, and the worshippers once more proceeded to the hall; and there, after another short prayer for forgiveness for all the coldness, and negligence, and omissions which might have sinned against Heaven during the act of worship, Beattie dismissed them.

One only he called to him from the farthest end of the hall—one who seemed to withdraw himself from the rest, as if in deep humility and shame. He had knelt, too, in the chapel, not within the choir, but in the antechapel. He had knelt on the bare marble pavement, had worn no surplice, had scarcely raised his head, or his voice, in any prayer, but the Confession of Sin, had refrained from joining in the songs of thanksgiving; and when the service was concluded, had reverently opened the door for the warden to retire through, and then had shrunk back into a nook in one corner of the antechapel. When he came up to Beattie, although Beattie addressed him with the greatest gentleness, and Villiers inquired kindly for his health, he kept his eyes fixed on the ground, as if unable to raise them in the face of another fellow-mortal. And there was an expression of sorrow and shame, and at the same time of meekness and modesty, in his countenance, which was full of touching interest. Few would have recognised in the subdued and devoted penitent, the once profligate, seditious, and abandoned Cookesley.

Beattie begged him to visit the mendicant, who was to be lodged within the walls that night, and to see if there was any thing the matter with him—any thing which would require medical advice. And when Cookesley had retired, Villiers could not help remarking on his changed character and depressed aspect. “You cannot persuade him yet,” he said, “to take his position among you. And yet

his services, from his surgical knowledge, are very valuable."

"I have scarcely endeavoured to persuade him," replied Beattie. "The illness which he suffered subsequently to that disturbance at the Forest, and which he caught during his confinement in prison, completely sobered him. Bevan told me that he never saw such an alteration, and that he was astonished to find how many good points of character came out, which had been overlaid and buried under the extravagances of a reckless youth, plunged into the dissipations of London, without home or guidance. Oh! when will our Church think of our medical students? When will it remember that with the healing of the body the healing of the soul is most intimately joined; and while it raises hospitals for the bodies of the sick, when will it also raise by their side colleges for those who attend to them? Ever since he has been here he has exhibited such gentleness, such humility, such earnestness, that I have scarcely liked to disturb a discipline which is productive of such good fruits. It is of his own choice that he does not enter the chapel during Divine service. He knows that the profligacy of his former life is a matter of public notoriety; and he feels more satisfaction himself in openly taking his true position as a penitent, than in endeavouring to maintain himself outwardly on a level with those who have been guiltless of such sins as his."

"And perhaps," continued Villiers, "it may be better for the society itself that it should not be compromised by too soon admitting into its bosom even the reformed and converted."

"It may be so," replied Beattie. "By being brought into such a refuge as this, he is saved from becoming the hardened, reckless, impenitent profligate, or the fanatical, ill-directed enthusiast, which

he would have become in the world after a mis-spent life like his. And he meets with so much tenderness, and kindness, and Christian love from all, that there is comparatively little bitterness in his position — far less, indeed, than in that compulsory dissimulation, and almost hypocrisy, which is forced on us by being placed in false situations at variance with our real internal character. The early Church would have excluded him from Communion for a far longer time than I ventured to exclude him. And perhaps his best preparation for heaven is to remain in his present humbled and anxious state. He has before him sufficient hope to encourage him in his efforts at self-denial and improvement, and a sufficient fear to make him watchful and careful. And he seems to take such pleasure in rendering services to any of the community, and in performing for them even the most menial offices, that I value his child-like humility more than any ease and comfort which he might find in being relieved too soon from the burden on his conscience. He has been saved, dear Villiers, as far as human eyes can see — saved from utter perdition, and by the shelter of this place. And to have saved one soul from impenitence and hardness of heart, and to have brought it to heaven, under the strict but blessed discipline of such a community as this, is enough to repay you for all that it has cost you.”

Villiers made no reply, but his eyes were moistened; and shaking Beattie tenderly by the hand, he bade him good night. “You have done it,” he said. “It is your work, under Providence. It is an easy thing to give money, easy to build walls of brick and stone—easy even to plan and arrange upon paper an ideal system of perfection; but to carry it into operation, to govern and mould the minds of

others, to bear with all the infirmities of temper, to endure all the hardships and privations, which in any good form of society must fall most heavily—not on those who are ruled, but on those who rule; to do all this patiently, and unweariedly, and without any hope of reward upon earth, and to sacrifice for it, what you have sacrificed, the quietness, and peace, and independence of your life in Oxford—all this——. However,” he continued, “these are not subjects to be spoken of. May God bless you, and keep you, and all around you!” And with a full, tender, tranquil sense of gratitude, hope, and comfort blending with deep sorrow, Villiers was retiring, when Beattie affectionately stopped him.

“Pardon me,” he said, “if I ask one question. Shall you be present at the ceremony to-morrow?”

Villiers almost started, but answered, at once, “No. I would not willingly that private and personal feelings should mix with such a solemn act of religion. Her mind has been shaken enough already; and all that must take place should be conducted as tranquilly and privately as possible. The bishop will be at the chapel at ten o’clock, and Lady Eleanor will be with Mrs. Bevan. You have saved her, dear Beattie. What a blessing to have restored such a spirit from schism and error, to the communion of truth! You may witness her restoration; I can do nothing but rejoice in it.”

Beattie saw that it was a subject on which he dared not say more; and the friends parted.

CHAPTER XX.

IF many visions of Villiers's heart had been turned to emptiness and gall—if his home had been left desolate—if the delight of his eyes had been taken from him—if on that which had been the hope of his happiest hours he now dared not even look—if at midnight, in his dreams, in every waking moment, one black spot hung motionless before his eyes—the thought of his lost child, and the agony of contemplating its almost necessary destiny in the hands of villains—if, when he turned over the pages of those fearful Parliamentary Reports, which have laid bare the miseries and sins of the poor and deserted, he was obliged to close the book in anguish (for his own child might now be enduring the same fate)—and if, now that year after year had passed away, recovery seemed hopeless, and the punishment of Heaven to be sealed upon his own disobedience to his parent—yet Villiers's existence was not without its blessings—real, deep, substantial blessings—and his heart melted into thankfulness.

He reined up his horse, which seemed to know every sound and movement of its master, and to sympathise with his feelings; and from the brow of the declivity which sloped down to the little brook he looked back upon the Priory, now gleaming calmly and beautifully in the placid moonlight. The heavens were cloudless, and scarcely a night-breeze waved the branches of the oaks, or stirred the feathers of the fern, which mantled round his path.

Every star appeared in its watch. There was no sound but the lulling murmur of the brook, and the faint swell of distant voices mingled with the deep tones of an organ, rising from the dim-lighted windows of the chapel; for on the evenings of festivals the inmates of the Priory were accustomed to meet in that holy building to fulfil the injunctions of the Apostle—"If any be merry, let him sing psalms;" and there, reverently and piously, and as a devotional exercise, they indulged in the holy luxury of sacred music, without any of that levity and incongruity, which besets its performance in a theatre or a concert-room.

Villiers listened to the solemn strains as they rose up into the still night-air; and he blessed God, who had not deserted him—who had given him in the place of his child such an object for his tender care—such a home for his affections—such a hope of good to all around him—such a promise of fruit to his labours. He uttered a prayer for all within its walls; and repeating to himself the psalm of David, "O how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts" (Ps. lxxxiv.), he once more turned his horse, and rode slowly along the brow of the park.

As he passed one of the park gates, near which, on the outside, stood the blackened ruins of a miserable cottage, which had been destroyed by lightning, Villiers spurred his horse, as smitten with a sudden pang, and galloped rapidly along the green sward, as if to distract his thoughts from some painful subject. The blackened ruin had reminded him of a tale of horror within it, which had been brought before him in his very first inquiries into the state of his peasantry—a tale of poverty, of misery, of crime, of incest. And when Villiers came to examine into the condition of his

tenantry, and especially of his cottagers—when he had visited them in their own miserable abodes, and inquired into their habits, he had been so shocked and appalled by the recurrence of similar tales, that he scarcely ever dared to revert to the subject, even in his thoughts. It was not that they were worse than their neighbours; this in itself aggravated the evil. But Villiers had often dwelt, in foreign climes, on the bold, cheerful, innocent, contented, simple-minded peasantry of England, as they had been pictured to his imagination. And when he came to look for them upon his own estate, among those for whose happiness and goodness he was responsible to Almighty God, he found—what?—families huddled together in miserable hovels, without one protection to common decency, and tempted, even familiarised, with the most horrible crimes. Their wages were scarcely sufficient to maintain life at its lowest ebb, without one comfort—one superfluity—one provision for sickness and old age—one hope of elevation from the depths of want—one innocent domestic luxury to bind together parents to their homes, and children to their parents. Self-respect had vanished beneath the crushing, chilling gripe of a relentless poverty,—a poverty which those who should have relieved it stigmatised and punished as a crime. Two hideous objects stared them in the face, as awaiting them at the close of their life—the poor-house and the grave; and the grave stripped of all the blessings which holiness and religion pour around it to the peasant even more than to the king. They had been deserted by their clergyman. The parish itself was the same as that in which the town was situated; and if the town had been neglected, how much more the distant and outlying scattered villages!

From that moment, Villiers, to whom before the very name of a manufactory was odious, never indulged in one reproach even upon that frightful system. "Till we," he said, "till the agriculturists and landlords of England, have wiped off the black blot upon our own fame — have repented of our own sins, and redressed the wrongs which we have committed by dealing with the possession of land as with an instrument for making money, and by becoming ourselves, not the rulers, the teachers, the parents, the sovereigns of our tenantry, but their taskmasters, and master-manufacturers — manufactures of corn — manufacturers, with the same spirit of avarice, the same selfishness, the same mercenary calculations, the same gambling speculation, the same neglect of those who toil to make us rich, as the manufacturers of silks and cottons — till we have done this, we are in no condition to censure others."

And his first thought had been to effect this — not by acts of parliament (Villiers smiled in melancholy scorn at the name of acts of parliament), but by example, by self-sacrifice. Once more he reined up his horse, and looked down upon a hamlet, or more than hamlet, which had sprung up in one corner of the park, near to the restored Priory. He had chosen a spot where the lofty ridges of the park retired, and left a wide, open vale, surrounded with gentle undulations, green with grass, and tufted with trees. The little Hawkstone brook, crossed by more than one simple bridge, ran foaming through the middle of the vale; and hanging by its side, and about the declivities, there rose a number of white thatched cottages, not ranged in rows (Villiers knew that geometrical lines have little connection with the sympathies and prejudices of home affections), but scattered here and there, as if by

accident, each having some little peculiarity, a tree, or knoll, or jutting mass of rock, to mark it to the occupant as his own home. "Man," repeated Villiers to Bevan, "never can be made what he should be till he possesses property — something that may belong exclusively to himself, something which distinguishes him from others by some mark more binding to his affections than the chequer No. 1. or No. 2."

Each cottage also had its garden; and the gardener at the great house was in daily communication with their inmates, teaching them the proper cultivation of vegetables, and supplying them, as required, with the most useful grafts of fruit-trees, and even with the finest flowers which could be grown in the open air.

"Flowers," said Villiers to Bevan, "are the innocent luxury of nature—the triumph of that exquisite art which the poor are as capable of enjoying as the rich. No cottage of mine shall be without its flower-garden."

Villiers did not give them at once any extent of ground beyond what might enable them to keep their pig, and, if they manifested sufficient habits of improvement, their cow. He did not think that to convert the labourer into a small farmer—a farmer without either capital or skill to extract from the earth its proper amount of fertility, was consistent either with sound morals, or sound economy, or sound politics. But he did take care that even the labourer should have the means, not only of subsistence, but of improvement. Mr. Atkinson, in calculating their wages, had recommended a certain sum as the rate most usual in the neighbourhood. He feared that by exceeding it on one estate discontent would be produced on others. But Villiers authoritatively, and almost sternly, rebuked him.

“Calculate,” he said, “not what others give or what the labourer, driven to desperation, will consent to receive rather than perish by starvation, but what he ought to have — what a Christian should give to his brother. Insure to him a subsistence, simple and frugal, but plentiful and wholesome. It is with his body that he labours, and his body we must nurture. Provide for him some innocent indulgences. Let him have his little feast-days, even his occasional luxuries. What is the weary monotony of life without some recreation? And he who toils with his body, must be recreated in his body. Calculate for accidents, for sickness, for old age. Teach him prudence, by giving him wherewithal to be prudent — something to lay by against the winter’s day. Provide also for the rearing of a family. They whose minds are enlarged, and their enjoyments varied, may endure life in comparative solitude, and make a home for themselves in their studies or imaginations; but for the poor and uneducated a home is necessary. And let us take care that the fulfilment of a command from Heaven — ‘increase and multiply’ — does not generate misery instead of happiness, hatred instead of love, crime instead of goodness, by coupling it with the embitterments of poverty and the dread of destitution. The peasant must educate his children. He should have the means of sending them out into the world — not in a vain effort to rise into a higher sphere than that in which nature has placed them, but to gain their bread by honest labour. Lastly, he must have the means of being merciful and charitable himself, and of casting even his mite into the treasury of the House of God. These are the calculations to be made when we are estimating the rate of wages to the labourer; and with

nothing short of this ought a Christian landlord to be content."

Mr. Atkinson heard him, and looked up with amazement, and even doubted whether these new Oxford notions had not turned Villiers's head; and one day he even went so far as to consult with Mrs. Atkinson on the propriety of remonstrating against such extravagance, which must utterly ruin the estate. But, after the trial of three years, he found that instead of being ruined the estate was increased in value; and at last even the Conservative principles of the cool, calculating, wary, and practical agent gave way to the energy and loftiness of Villiers's theory.

Nor had Villiers forgotten their recreation. In the centre of the hamlet he had marked out the village green, with its tall elm-trees grouped about it, its cricket-ground, its maypole—every thing that could recall a second Auburn. He had encouraged the villagers to form a little band of music, which played in the summer evenings on the green, while the old women sat with their spinning-wheels at the doors of their houses, and the younger men practised all kinds of athletic games, Villiers himself often standing by and looking on, and with him Charles Bevan; for Bevan also he had been enabled to fix in the parish of Hawkstone, and to give him the living, vacant by the death of Dr. Grant; and in this little outlying hamlet resided one of his curates, in that neat thatched cottage embowered in honeysuckles and roses, which nestled close to the lowly but reverend village church.

And with Bevan there often came a lady—simple, gentle, sensible, and refined, and clinging to his arm with affectionate reverence. And the same delicate and amiable Mary Vincent, who could not go to a ball to dance over the sufferings of her fellow-

creatures, now, as Bevan's wife, became his chief aider and almoner in ministering to the wants of his poor. And this hamlet was in an especial manner their favourite resort, for here Villiers was first trying the experiment of transplanting the better part of that population of the town, which, having been created by the sudden rise of its manufactures, had been thrown out of employment by their sudden fall. When Mr. Smith's foreign speculations had failed, and his foreign correspondents, having once experienced that the commodities which he had furnished them were made up out of rotten materials, had abandoned all connection with him, Villiers found that the bankruptcy of the manufacturers had thrown upon the poor-rates of the parish a vast body of indigent workmen reduced to starvation; and this was the great problem which occupied his thoughts, and perplexed him with almost insurmountable difficulties. On a small scale he was called on to solve the same problem which England is called on to solve upon a vast one, and which, however it may be staved off for a time by some temporary revival of trade, or by the sacrifice of the agricultural interest, must ultimately stare us in the face, and be solved at the peril of our life, as soon as other countries have learnt, as they rapidly are learning, that they need not depend for manufactures on any but their own resources.

One mode, indeed, was offered to Villiers, not of removing the evil, but of postponing it, with the certainty of bringing it ultimately upon him, aggravated beyond all hope of remedy. The Messrs. Silkem came to him, and informed him that, being nearly, if not wholly, ruined by their past manufacturing speculations, they must stop payment, and throw out of employment all their workmen, unless

Villiers could supply them the means of taking Mr. Smith's vacant factory; and, by demanding no rent for it, could enable them to carry on their speculations on a more extended scale. And they supported their petition by the irrefragable argument that manufacturers were the very heart's blood of the British empire, and that Villiers, as an agriculturist, must therefore be content to be sacrificed in their support: nor could they at all understand the reasoning by which Villiers calmly replied to them — that he had claims upon him for his money as well as they had for theirs; that especially the Church depended upon him for its support, which there was no probability of its receiving from the manufacturers; that the surrender of his claim to rent would only enable and tempt them to reduce the wages of the workmen, who would in no degree be relieved by it; and that if ruin hitherto had been the consequence of past speculation, future and more extended speculation could only end in an aggravation of the same evil. Villiers stated this, and much more; but Messrs. Silkem had been to London, and had attended a meeting of the Anti-Corn-Law League at Covent Garden Theatre, and they were wholly unable to comprehend his arguments. Villiers, however, was immovable; and he astonished them even more by informing them that it was not his intention to allow Mr. Smith's factory to be again occupied in that manner, under any circumstances, or at any rent. He did not think that any amount of wealth which it might enable Mr. Smith to accumulate for himself was at all a compensation for the evils inflicted on a place by bringing together a manufacturing population, exposed to all the temptations of such a life, and fluctuating daily between the extremes of destitution and of self-indulgence.

The Messrs. Silkem and all the other political economists of the town opened their eyes widely at this announcement, uttered sundry profound, and not complimentary exclamations on the subject of Oxford opinions, and prophesied that Hawkstone would be ruined, and that Mr. Villiers must go to gaol. But Hawkstone had been ruined already, and Villiers did not go to gaol. He reduced his own personal expenditure to the lowest possible amount, confined his establishment to necessary servants, with the addition of a number of young boys whom he took from the schools, and caused to be trained up under his own roof, and under the eye of an experienced, well-principled, religious house-steward, and the instruction of a chaplain, that they might be fitted for various domestic situations as they grew up. And though no one was more alive to the duty and expediency of maintaining in those who are called to govern an exterior aspect of dignity, he thought that, in a crisis like the present, even this was to be sacrificed to the more pressing necessity of providing for the poor. "The Church," he would say to Bevan, "rather than that the poor should starve, would sell even the vessels of the altar."

But in the mean while there lay before him the large, unmanageable, destitute population of the town; and how were they to be provided for? Happily he was enabled to employ the assistance of Bevan, as the rector of the parish, and Bevan was not single-handed. His first thought and plan had been to gather round him a small body of clergy as his curates, who might live under the same roof, at the same table, and might govern the parish, large as it was, effectually by their united labour. And he found no difficulty in accomplishing his purpose. Oxford—the maligned, suspected Oxford—supplied

him with a number of young men, some already in holy orders, some preparing to enter them, who were rejoiced after taking their degree to place themselves under his guidance, and, directed by him in their course of reading, to pursue their studies together, while they took a part in attending the schools, visiting the poor and sick, and celebrating divine service.

At eight o'clock every morning, Bevan himself, with his seven curates, went in a little procession to the parish church ; at four o'clock in the afternoon the same spectacle was seen : and though the cold sneered, and the profligate mocked, and the ignorant and self-willed declared that to worship the Almighty twice a day, as the Church of their fathers prescribed and commanded, was mere popery, the better spirits—the poor, whose only comfort could be found in religion, and even the earnest, sincere Dissenters, confessed that the act was good ; and many of them came also. Bevan was an admirable musician ; and in the evenings of week-days, with the assistance of an able teacher, he gathered round him a little choir, and soon, very soon, he was enabled to introduce into the solemnities of divine worship as much music as gave to it its due outward charms, without sacrificing the realities of internal devotion to the pleasure of the ear. And strange as it may seem to hear of a body of seven curates employed in a living of scarcely more than seven hundred a year, yet the blessing of Heaven seemed to descend upon Bevan's means, as on the widow's cruise.

He also, like Villiers, reduced his establishment and personal expenditure to bare necessities. Instead of furnishing the rectory-house as modern refinement would require, he gave up all but two or three rooms to his curates. Villiers enabled him to build

on to it, not a large drawing-room and a best bedroom, but two simple ancient-looking apartments, with open arched roof and latticed windows, one for a little dining-hall, the other for a library; and until means could be procured for furnishing this with books, Villiers removed into it the theological portion of his own collection. There was a charm in the community of labour and study, in the association of charity, in the regular services of the Church, in the order and decency of the system of life, in the religious and tranquil tone that pervaded the whole little community, which made the curacy of Hawkstone an object of desire and ambition to many a young man. And Bevan soon found that, instead of being required to pay eighty pounds a year to each of his curates, he could command as many as he wanted, who were satisfied to devote their labours to him as an exercise for their profession with scarcely any remuneration whatever, and whose private means even enabled them to contribute considerably to the funds of the little association. One of them died under Bevan's roof—a young man of rank and private fortune, whom Bevan had rescued from much evil at Oxford, and had watched over with the greatest care. And, to the surprise of all, it was found that he had left a considerable sum for the permanent foundation and endowment of a body of seven clergymen in Hawkstone, to be placed under the control of the rector, and employed by him in his parochial ministrations.

Even from the first Bevan never had despaired. Beattie, and Villiers, and himself were in daily communication; and they comforted, strengthened, and supported each other.

“Let us plan and commence,” said Villiers, “what is needed for the Church, what is right, what is good. Even though it seem gigantic in idea and

desperate in execution, Heaven will provide the means. Heaven never failed a mighty work conceived in faith and nurtured with prayer."

And it was with this little body of clergy that Bevan and Villiers proposed to grapple with the mass of indigence and misery now left in the streets of Hawkstone, as shapeless rocks and fragments of ruin are left in the bed of a torrent, when the waters are exhausted, or the current turned.

The first refuge which presented itself for the most destitute was the Union poor-house. But this Villiers steadily repudiated. "While I have bread to spare," he said, "no poor member of Christ's body, no starving child of the Church in this place, shall ever enter the poor-house. If their poverty be a crime, the result of their own fault, and the poor-house is to be the gaol and place of correction in which they are to be brought to repentance, a system and place of correction, of which the Church is not the soul, is not fit to receive them. And if their poverty be a visitation from Heaven upon innocent beings, far less shall they be doomed for it to the ignominy, the privation, the confinement, and the hopelessness of a gaol. No, Bevan," he exclaimed, indignantly, "let others provide as they may for the poor of their own persuasion; our children, the children of the Church, must be fed and comforted in their afflictions, at whatever cost, by the Church herself.

He selected the families in which he could discern sufficient seeds of good, and transplanted them into the hamlet, which has been mentioned already; and three other little settlements he proposed to form in other portions of the park. And when Mr. Atkinson remonstrated faintly against breaking up the pasture, and killing down the deer, Villiers took him to the highest ridge of the park, and bade him

look down upon the famishing families of Hawkstone, which Mr. Atkinson knew were crowded into its ruin-smitten streets, and then he pointed to a herd of deer, which bounded gracefully along the green grassy glades, and Villiers asked which in the sight of Heaven was most precious, and for which a Christian ought soonest to provide food. Some families also there were, who, having saved a little capital, were anxious to seek for employment in the colonies, and Villiers willingly aided them to depart. But he did not send them forth with only money in their pocket; he opened a communication with more than one of those devoted men who have recently gone forth as bishops of the Church into our distant settlements. He provided for their reception, at their landing, into the bosom of the Church. Bevan procured for them from the bishop of his diocese recommendatory letters, attesting their church-membership, and entreating the assistance of the faithful for them wherever they might be. He communicated also with the captains of the ships in which they embarked, appointed an agent to receive them on their arrival at the nearest sea-port, took care that they should not be exposed during the voyage to the contamination and miseries of which he had seen too many specimens in the ordinary course of emigration. And it was with many a deep and fervent thanksgiving that he received from them repeated accounts of their arrival and prosperity, and of the blessings and mutual comforts which they had derived from clinging all together in a strange soil, and planting themselves in its unoccupied wastes as a body, not as scattered individuals. Since for this also Villiers had provided; and when he planned the sending forth of a little band of emigrants, as far as possible he selected those who were united together by bonds of blood or friendship.

He brought them together, and accustomed them to look upon themselves as associated in a little polity. Before they left the country he endeavoured to provide among them for the various wants and arts most important in an infant settlement. One was a mason, another a carpenter, another a blacksmith, another a tailor. And when he was enabled to purchase a large tract of land in one of the settlements, he immediately remitted funds to its bishop, that he might build upon it a church, and plant at least three clergymen together on the spot, for whose subsequent support he provided by enforcing in the terms of tenure the full payment of tithes, and for the necessary multiplication of churches and ministers, and all the Levitical functions of the Church, by setting apart in the most favourable positions valuable endowments of land for colleges. He was surprised to find how little this cost. The purchase of one picture, the expense of one entertainment in London, the losses of one night's gambling, even the waste of a stable and of fox-hounds, would have swallowed up sums which now enabled him to diffuse blessings all around him.

And by degrees the mass of poverty and misery melted away. One rule—a strict, severe, almost stern rule—he laid down to Bevan in all his ministrations of mercy. Seek out the children of the Church, those who have not fallen into schism, who are not guilty of heresy. Even those who have must not be allowed to perish. But let us take care, while we succour their bodies, to think also of their souls. Let us not allow them to mistake an act of necessary charity as toleration or indifference to their sin. Mark in the clearest way you can the difference between a churchman and a dissenter; it may awaken them to a knowledge of their guilt. And Bevan found indeed that there was no disposi-

tion in Dissenters themselves to neglect their own poor ; and that he was only adopting an exclusive principle which had long been enforced by themselves.

But there was still a large portion of the population, which could not be transferred into the hamlets ; and Villiers knew that manufactures, in some proportion, were as necessary to the well-being and even existence of society as agriculture. What he had denounced and abhorred, both in its spirit and in its consequences, was the profligate extension of manufactures for the purpose of accumulating wealth in the hands of a few individuals, in a boundless fluctuating market, subject to reckless competition, tempting to every species of fraud, almost compelling the reduction of the labourers' wages to the minimum of subsistence, liable to panics, to gluts, to stagnation, to all the vicissitudes of gambling speculation, and thus hardening the hearts of one class by the idolatry of wealth, and eating like a cancer into the souls and the bodies of the other. Manufactures, with a fixed market, Villiers resolved to encourage. He therefore bound down all, over whom he had any influence, to obtain the commodities which they required from their own immediate neighbourhood. It was easy to exercise such a superintendence over the sellers that they should not convert this seeming monopoly into an occasion of fraud and extortion. And though the buyers might at times have been able to obtain a better article at a cheaper price from a distant spot, Villiers cast to the winds the miserable maxim of economists, that " the first law of prudence is to buy cheap, and to sell dear."

" The first law of God," he said to Bevan, " is to love Him, and to do His will. And among the records of his will I find no such law, nothing ap-

proaching to it,—nothing which does not seem to hold it up to reprobation and scorn. And the second law is to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to do to every man as we would that he should do unto us. Let us rather wear this coarse cloth, rather eat ill-made bread, rather live in an ill-constructed house for a time, bearing patiently these trifling vexations, than allow our brother to starve at our doors because he has not yet acquired perfection in his art ; and this perfection let us strive to teach him ; and instead of calculating how little we can give for the produce of others' labours, to enable those around us to enjoy their comforts and to improve their condition, let us rather think how much we can give without injury to those other interests, which Heaven has commanded us to consult. Defraud not the hireling of his wages ; wring not from the poor all that can be extorted in the shape of cheap prices. You are purchasing your own indulgences with the blood of the poor ; for from their wages the reduction must be ultimately extracted."

And when it was necessary to procure articles, such as foreign commodities, from a distance, Villiers did not send, or teach others to send, to the metropolis, and there purchase them by wholesale, at a cheaper rate. He gave to the shopkeeper in Hawkstone—the grocer, or the wine-merchant, or the bookseller—an introduction to the first wholesale houses in London, where they might be sure of obtaining what was really good ; and through the shopkeepers in his own native place he made all his purchases, insisting on their receiving such an amount of profit on their outlay as justice demanded, and insisting also that the same quality of article which he required himself should be supplied to the poor at the same price.

But what Villiers was most anxious to encourage

was a system of domestic manufactures—the spinning, knitting—every thing which could be carried on round the family fire-side. He loved to see the old women sunning themselves with their wheels before the doors, and the younger females within employed in works of the kind under the eye of their parents. And, in cases where this could not be accomplished, he proceeded to establish a manufactory of his own in Mr. Smith's deserted building—but a manufactory on very opposite principles to those which have made nearly one-sixth of England a sink of misery and vice. Villiers's object was not to accumulate money for himself, but to provide necessary comforts for others, and in doing this to discover, not how little might be given to the labourer, but how much consistently with the object in view. Having calculated the extent of his market in his own immediate neighbourhood, he limited also the amount of his production. He estimated the price set upon it, not by the extreme point to which competition—often dishonest and desperate competition—might be able to drive it down, but by the cost of the raw material, and machinery, and capital, and by that amount of wages, which, as a Christian, he felt due to the labourer. And so far as he could restrict his consumers to his own market, he could command from them this price, which, though higher than that of neighbouring districts, was fully compensated by its enabling the workmen to give a higher price reciprocally for the produce of the soil. The terms were higher, but the proportion was scarcely altered, and the money all circulated in the neighbourhood. And in the wages due to the workman Villiers calculated much which an economist would have rejected with disdain. He dealt with him as with the agricultural labourer. He provided for

him instruction, hours and means of relaxation, opportunities of worship, holidays—the holidays of the Church, enjoyments of various kinds. Mr. Smith's factory, instead of glaring with lights at midnight, and sounding with wheels both day and night, now enjoyed its hours of nightly repose, its intervals of daily rest, its Sabbaths, and its sports. All was carried on under the direction of Bevan and his curates. The strictest discipline was maintained in preventing the evils of indiscriminate association ; the greatest care was taken in encouraging industry, the firmest severity exercised in chastising vice. Villiers did not indeed make a fortune by it, but he made others good and happy ; and he knew no other use of money. The economists looked on and smiled in scorn, and proved by the irrefragable arguments of figures that a system of restrictions and of confined markets must be ruinous ; and that in the nineteenth century it was madness even to argue against free trade, and its necessary consequence, competition : but Villiers was not ruined, and at the end of each year he found his income increasing. Heaven had given the promise, and nature, he knew not how, realised it.

Such had been some of the economical theories and acts of Villiers in relation to the unhappy town of Hawkstone ; and, seconded by Bevan and his coadjutors, he soon had the satisfaction of finding a very considerable impression made upon its population. From a turbulent, factious, schismatic, irreligious, profligate place, it became quiet, orderly, decent, and religious. Two new churches sprang up, and the old venerable church, reseated and repaired, was converted, by the zeal of the inhabitants, almost into a little cathedral. The alms increased, the irregular associations of voluntary and rash zeal were laid aside for more ecclesiastical operations

expressly sanctioned by the bishop. One after another the schismatic chapels became empty; and notwithstanding the outcry first raised under the watchword of Popery, at last Bevan, prudent and cautious in his zeal, and never seeking to restore a form till he had created the spirit, with the support of his bishop triumphed over all opposition. Even Mr. O'Foggarty, baffled and disappointed, was compelled to make arrangements for abandoning his mission as a hopeless work. When the true image of the Church in all its beauty was exhibited to poor as well as rich, and its true principles were distinctly enunciated and enforced, not by an individual, but by a body, few could close their eyes, or withhold their obedience, but the ignorant and self-willed; the rest returned to the fold from which they had strayed, and Hawkstone was comparatively at unity with itself.

Again and again, penetrated with all which Villiers had done for them, the inhabitants entreated him to add one more obligation, and to become their member. And they did indeed expel Mr. Marmaduke Brook both from his seat in Parliament, and from his 1500*l.* a-year commissionership. But Villiers would not enter the House of Commons. He felt that his first duties lay immediately around him; and until he could accomplish his work near to his own home, he refused to be distracted from it for nearly half the year by the necessity of living in London. And he had other reasons besides.

He could not join in any act which might restore to power avowed subverters of order, loyalty, and religion—men whose principles, if not their practice, involved the overthrow of the monarchy, and the corruption and suppression of the Christian faith. Villiers abhorred Liberalism. But neither

could he lift his hand to maintain in power an opposite party whose conduct might no less threaten the insensible subversion of all that was holy and venerable.

At the very thought of one theory of government then prevalent, he sickened and turned away with disgust. He who recognised as the first law of his being, as the first treasure of human knowledge, as the palladium of states, and the salt of the earth, divine truth, the truth of the divine nature as revealed by the Divine Being himself—he who, instead of asking, with Pilate, “What is truth?” had examined and found it enshrined in a Catholic Church—he who, having once recognised that Church as the creature and minister of God, would allow neither heresy nor schism to tamper with or persecute it—he who knew that in divine truth, and divine commands, and divine promises, there is a power eternal and omnipotent, and that if man will only boldly witness to them, and reverently obey them, even the madness of the people must be powerless against them—he whose whole conduct was based and shaped upon the highest of all principles, and who never acted without a principle wiser than all expediency, and safer than any cowardice—such a man might well shrink, with as much pain and aversion as a Christian sinner may feel towards brother sinners, from that miserable, compromising, vacillating, unprincipled policy, which now, under a specious name, had been elevated to the rule of the British empire. Villiers did not often trust himself to converse on it, for he bore before him the injunction “not to speak evil of dignities;” and he was humble and gentle in himself, and knew that he had sins of his own to answer for. But about this time he wrote a letter in answer to an application for his vote and interest in favour of a government candi-

date ; and as it has fallen into our hands we may as well communicate it to our readers.

“DEAR SIR,

“I am unwilling to omit a duty, which the constitution imposes on me, or to decline to give a vote in the ensuing election. But, in the present aspect of affairs, I can scarcely exercise this privilege without lending my support to men, and principles, and measures, which, whether on one side or on the other, would seem to be offensive to the great Ruler of all things, and full of injury to the country. If you would offer yourself to the electors of the county, as resolved to resist the further aggressions of democracy upon the Church and the throne, and to aid in maintaining the true principles both of religion and of loyalty, though you should be compelled to stand almost solitary in the House of Commons, and could do little more than witness to truth, like the prophets of old, in the midst of contempt and unbelief, still you would ultimately effect, under a blessing from Heaven, no little good ; and, whatever still remains in the heart of England of reverence, and faith, and courage, would gladly catch at such a voice, and cease at least to despair of their parliament and their country. To such professions as this I would willingly give my support ; but to any one who identifies his political opinions with the course hitherto pursued by Conservative governments, I must decline offering any assistance.

“After painful, but careful consideration, I am compelled to believe that nothing can inflict on the constitution and welfare of the British empire more fatal and deadly injuries than the policy now called Conservative.

“I have no doubt of the personal honesty, or of the good intentions of individuals ; but neither of

these can atone for the absence of elevated principles and true wisdom. Prudence in the government of nations cannot be separated from wisdom, nor practical expediency from deep philosophy, without ultimate destruction to both ; and no worldly talent, no industry, no financial ingenuity, no dexterity in managing a party, can atone for that avowed and resolute abandonment of all high principle, which is now held to be a necessary condition of any (so called) government. To have asserted and introduced this principle as an axiom of government is in itself a blow to all sound views of political society, from which it can scarcely recover. Individuals may have sinned in it before ; but till recent days and trials it has been carefully excluded from sight, and never boldly avowed, except in the worst periods of the democracies of Greece.

“ In attributing to this particular policy in particular hands the serious degree of mischief which has been expressed above, I wish to speak coolly and deliberately, and without the slightest tendency to exaggeration. And the statement is grounded upon this fact, that great truths can never be destroyed by enemies ; they can only be betrayed by professed friends. An armed force cannot annihilate my right to a property ; but one rash concession of my own will extinguish it for ever. And the true and elevated principles which raised and preserved the British empire, however cast out and trampled on for a time under the predominance of a democratical power, might yet remain in themselves untouched and secured by a protest, as a standard of truth, to which the better part of the nation might still appeal, and round which they might hope to rally, and ultimately restore them to power. But if those who are charged with their maintenance corrupt, and adulterate, and deny them,

and no further protest is raised in their behalf, they will perish from the face of our laws, and from the eyes of the people, and must be lost, it may be, for ever.

“Upon these grounds the Conservatives of England, and not any democratical party, if the British empire be destroyed, must be its destroyers.

“And already much has been done towards it. By one act it has been established that, even where the Church and the truth of Christ are concerned, governments may yield to fear even what they confess to be full of peril. And that, where evil is inevitable, it may be perpetrated by those who believe it to be evil, rather than that power should be given into the hands of opponents. By another, the great maxim of our constitution, and the only safeguard of our representative system, that the representative should not be the echo and the tool of his constituents, but a counsellor and adviser for the whole empire, was surrendered, when the present leader of the Conservatives, courteously, but with no far prospective wisdom, retired from the representation of his University. It is the very keystone of society, and the pervading law of all progress in the British constitution, that no changes in it shall be made, but only developments. And yet, even in contradiction of the authors of the Reform Act, Conservatives have declared that act to be a revolution, and yet have themselves consented to take a part in the establishment of that revolution, and in carrying out its principles. To the House of Commons was virtually surrendered the right of the crown to appoint its ministers, when it was declared that since the Reform Act, no minister should hold office without the approbation of the Commons. The appointment of ambassadors was abandoned when one whom the crown

had chosen was permitted to retire from his post at the command of the Commons. The very height and essence of all democratical tyranny has been maintained, by defending the omnipotence of the Commons against the laws and judges of the realm. An Ecclesiastical Commission has been created, which has broken up the outward system of the Church, violated its oaths, tampered with its independence, destroyed the rights of private property, dried up the sources of individual endowments, mutilated those cathedral corporations which should have been restored and revived to become the chief arms of its strength, and annihilated Episcopates for money. And when the Church, awakened from her trance, has called out for redress and mercy, her voice has been listened to with indifference. The defence of the Church has been rested, not upon its divine institution and authority, but upon vile and worthless titles, which may be shattered and cast to the winds by the first impugner, upon compact, upon expediency, upon private opinions of its morality and goodness. And in this statesmen have acted as an advocate who, when charged with maintaining a title to property, should suppress and stifle the true deeds, and should put forward only forgeries — weak pleas, which a breath would blow to atoms, and which no defence can clear from treachery but the apology of ignorance. It has been resolved to maintain and propagate a scheme of education which is emptied of all religious truths, in which the teacher, and the State in his person, stands before the pupil as either too ignorant to decide on divine truth amidst contending falsehoods, or too indifferent to assert it. And it is proposed now, it is said, to sanction the extension of such a system to the upper as to the lower classes; and at the same time to introduce

it into one of the strongholds of the Church, even into an ancient university of the empire, as it has already been insisted on in founding colleges in our colonies. And the great maxim of the English law, that endowments shall not be guarded, or even permitted, by the State, unless they are devoted to definite ends of goodness and wisdom, has been destroyed by a voluntary offer to perpetuate possessions left by men without any fixed creed, in the hands of others, whose creed is heresy and blasphemy. These are but some of the principles which a policy, compelled by external pressure openly to repudiate the assertion of any principle but expediency, to shrink from truth and from law as from an abominable thing, to refuse to tie itself up by any bold assertion of truth, which might warn or instruct the people, to guard always some loophole for subterfuge and evasion, and to profess but one rule of action—the succumbing to circumstances under pressure, has admitted into the practice of men pledged nominally to be the guardians of all the highest interests of the empire, and which have even been stamped upon our statute books.

“If I cannot look upon such acts, and upon such principles, except with reprobation—if I dread the responsibility of contributing by any voice of mine to the continuance of power which such policy must abuse, and of trusts which it must betray—and if, in the absence of any higher spirit, at present, to protest against these deeds and maxims, I see no course left but to stand aloof from the administration of public affairs, and to endeavour in a more private and humble sphere to remedy the evils of that portion of society which is immediately placed under my care, you must neither charge me with calumniating the character of men respectable in the eyes of the world, nor with shrinking from my duty.

“The spirit of the people must be first changed, and then the spirit of their representatives may be changed likewise; that is, if Providence has not set his seal to the condemnation of England, and devoted it finally to destruction.

“I beg you to believe me, sir,

“Your obedient faithful servant,

“ERNEST VILLIERS.”

CHAPTER XXI.

WE left Villiers slowly riding home by moonlight, along the brow of the park. His heart was full—many other thoughts were crowding on him besides the recollections which we have just recalled. And abandoning himself to them, he allowed his horse to pursue the path most familiar to him, till the steed brought its master, not to the gateway of the house, but to the old oak bench, which commanded a view of Hawkstone, and to the silvery beech, whose trunk inscribed with initials not yet obliterated, had arrested Villiers's step the first day of his return to the seat of his ancestors. Under that beech the horse stopped—it had been long his master's custom so to do: and through the thick tangled underwood, which clothed the brow of the steep declivity, an opening had been cleared away, through which the eye could rest, not on the windings of the river, or on the grey tower of Hawkstone Church, but on the distant white colonnade of Lord Claremont's house, embosomed in its grove of stately oaks. And Villiers gazed on it mournfully, and yet affectionately and reverently.

“To-morrow!” he thought within himself, “to-morrow!” and the reins dropped from his hand; and while the tears gushed from his eyes, he clasped his hands in prayer.

And at the same hour what was passing with the usual inmates of that pile on which Villiers was gazing? One, who had once been its inmate, the hand of death had already smitten. Lord Clare-

mont lay mouldering in the vault of his ancestors, within the chapel of the restored Priory. But Lady Eleanor was still living; and at that moment where was she? She was not in her own mansion, but in a small, simple, but solemn-looking chamber, the latticed oriel of which looked out upon the grey tower of Hawkstone Church, and the green meadow, and tall clustered elms, and gently-flowing river, which nearly encircled the old, once-ruined hospice of the Béguinage of Hawkstone. Ruined it was no longer. Its simple gables, its humble wooden cloister, roughly but quaintly carved, its clustered chimneys, its buttressed gateway, which shut it out from the too near vicinity of the town, its dim-lighted refectory marked by the large square-headed windows, and not left without their little emblazonments of heraldry and scrolls of texts,—even the little chapel, no longer a stabling for cows, had all been restored—all touched and finished with that exquisite delicacy of feeling, that taste for severe truth which pervaded every work of Villiers, and which no mere technical skill, nothing but a deep philosophy and a Christian spirit, can ever attain in art.

And in that chamber, before an open Bible, her long beautiful hair let down over her face, her eyes upturned to Heaven, her hands clasped in intense anguish, her cheeks wet with tears, Lady Eleanor was kneeling in prayer. She was praying for light, for strength, for guidance, for support, now when the hour of trial was approaching. “To-morrow,” she murmured, like Villiers, “to-morrow!” and then shuddering and shrinking, she bowed down her head upon the holy volume, and nearly dropped to the ground. “To-morrow!”—that day of awe!

So absorbed was she in the contemplation that

she did not hear a gentle voice at the door, or, when no answer was given, the gentle foot which entered the room. It was a lady, attired, like Lady Eleanor, in black, but seemingly not as the garb of mourning. Her dress was simple, and not uncommon; and yet there was something in it—perhaps it was the plain cap, perhaps the broad collar of purest white—which distinguished its wearer from the ordinary world. Age had stamped her features with an impress of gravity and dignity, chastened by a mild resignation. Though her hair, plainly banded across her forehead, was nearly grey, her manner and movements still retained activity and strength. She paused, as on entering the room she saw Lady Eleanor, and gazed on her with a deep look of sympathy and affection. But Lady Eleanor heard her move, and looked round. She did not rise from her knees, but stretched out her hands to her in silence, and besought her with piteous looks to take her seat where Lady Eleanor herself was kneeling. And Mrs. Bevan did so. And bending down over the drooping figure she clasped Lady Eleanor in her arms, laid her head upon her own bosom, and, without speaking, allowed her own tears to fall thick upon her face.

“My friend! my mother! my more than mother!” faltered Lady Eleanor, “pray for me, for I am in a great strait. I thought the bitterness of the struggle was past, but it has come upon me again—an hour of darkness—now in the last moment. Pray for me!”

Mrs. Bevan made no reply except by stooping down and pressing her affectionately to her bosom. At last she said, “I cannot wonder at it. Hardly would the tempter leave you without one more conflict. But will you not see some one—some one who could comfort and enlighten you more than I

could? My son is here. Or shall I send for Mr. Beattie?"

"No," replied Lady Eleanor, "it is too late—not at this hour of night—not for me. And yet—O my mother! is it not a fearful, an awful thing to turn aside from the faith of our fathers?"

Mrs. Bevan gently disengaged herself from the almost convulsive embrace of the suffering convert. And in a few minutes Bevan, who was in an adjoining room, despatched a note to Beattie, at his mother's request, begging that even at so late an hour he would come into Hawkstone. It was Beattie, who under Providence had been the means, not of exciting, but of deciding those doubts respecting the truth of the Romish Church, which had been raised in Lady Eleanor's mind chiefly by the mistaken conduct of O'Foggarty. To Beattie, ever since those doubts had arisen, and chiefly since Lord Claremont's death, she had been induced to apply more and more frequently, and to look up to him almost as a parent; and under his judicious and wise instruction she had at length conscientiously resolved on taking that solemn step which was contemplated the day following, and requesting the Bishop of the diocese to admit her into the communion of the Catholic Church in England.

And Beattie lost no time in following the messenger into Hawkstone. He had witnessed in the delicate, elevated, pure mind of Lady Eleanor so much of intense suffering during the conflict through which she had passed, that he was prepared to find it recur with even increased violence now when the trying hour was approaching. And though he trusted much to the judicious and affectionate support of Mrs. Bevan, with whom Lady Eleanor had been domesticated for the last month, he knew that her acute understanding might suggest doubts and

temptations which could only be counteracted by one more experienced in the controversy. Beattie had studied it deeply; and having studied it deeply, he did not despise it — did not think light of its difficulties — did not presume, as so many now presume, to despatch it with a light word and a bold laugh.

On his arrival at the Béguinage he found Lady Eleanor more calm. The paroxysm was past; but the deep and fervent gratitude with which she clasped her hands, when he entered the room, satisfied him that his presence was needed. He took her hands in his own, uttered a blessing upon her, beneath which she bowed down her head reverently and humbly, and then he led her to a seat by him. She would have fallen on her knees before him, so intense was her feeling, so deep her reverence for him; but he entreated her to be composed.

“Dear Lady Eleanor,” he said, “these feelings are natural, and almost necessary — in some sense they may be even right. And yet in all that you have thought and done, and resolved to do, you have proposed to yourself but one object — truth, the truth of Heaven; and ought we to admit of any other? But excited feeling of any kind is scarcely a fit preparation for clearly discerning truth, least of all in a moment of temptation; and it may be, that this agony into which you have fallen, this renewed darkness and perplexity, is the work — the last work — of the tempter.”

Lady Eleanor only replied by a deep groan.

“You have prayed,” said Beattie — “prayed to Heaven for light and aid. Let us pray together.” And, kneeling down by her side, he led up her thoughts to the great source of all truth, and entreated comfort for her affliction, enlightenment for

her doubts, support in her weakness, and wisdom for his own ministrations. "And now," he said, when they rose from their knees, "tell me in what thoughts and suggestions has originated this return of doubts, which I had thought were long since dispelled."

"I know not," replied Lady Eleanor, faintly. "A cloud of darkness, of bewilderment, came over me, as if there were nothing in the world true or certain—as if all religion was a delusion, when the best and wisest of men so differ in their views. And then came the memory of my father, and of her who was to me in my childhood even more than a mother—that saint in heaven, Lady Esther. And I thought within myself, how could I meet them beyond the grave—a traitor, a renegade to the faith of my fathers? Oh Mr. Beattie! if you are deceiving me—or rather (I meant not that), if you are deceived yourself! Where is the truth? and how can we find it? Were it not better to remain where Providence has placed us at our birth, than to plunge into the dark gulf, with only the light of our own blinded eyes?"

"It were indeed," answered Beattie, "it were better, far better to remain patiently under any system, however faulty, in which Providence has placed us, than to attempt escape solely by the light of our own eyes. Others have fled from Romanism in this way, and their end has for the most part been destruction. But you are not thus deluded. Heaven, in making us Christians, as in making us men, has willed that we should live, and that in all our deeds we should act, not as individuals, but in society, under rulers, as members of a body, as children of a family. Think not that, in abandoning the false system and the usurping rulers under which you have so long lived, you are to be

left without a shelter or a guide. You are not deciding upon truth and falsehood, right and wrong, by its accordance with your own notions, without any thought of an authority by which it is to be decided for you : rather you are placing yourself under authority, and submitting yourself to your rightful ruler instead of an usurper."

"I know it," replied Lady Eleanor. "I have not forgotten what you have urged so often ; and yet when the hour approaches I tremble and doubt. Am I—am I fit to distinguish between the false prophet and the true, the false usurper and the lawful sovereign, any more than between falsehood and truth, good and evil, in themselves ? Must not the dimness of my own eyes and the defilement of my own heart mix with and pervert my judgment in each case alike?"

"They may," replied Beattie, "and they must do so. But this is the trial placed before us all by Heaven, and from which we cannot be exempted. This is that exercise of our private judgment respecting which, whether it be a right or a duty, we need not ask ; all that we know is, that we cannot escape from it. As reasoning beings we must persevere in it. And we are so far safe from the evils and sins of the licence of human will and of human reason when, in determining our course, we resolve to inquire, not which path seems best to ourselves, but who is the proper guide for us to follow—not what we shall adopt, but whom we shall obey."

"And yet," said Lady Eleanor, "alas ! all this I have heard from you before. But you must tell me it again. Tell it to me, and I will listen humbly."

"I would remind you," said Beattie, "of that great rule which we laid down for the right exercise

of this choice. I warned you often and earnestly against looking for the test of a true commission from Heaven—for the seal of your rightful rulers in the Church—to any of those deceitful marks which are too commonly appealed to in this day. Look not for it to anything within yourself, or within the minds of others. It is an outward mark. Deem not that sanctity—such sanctity as most attracts the eye of man, or purity, or self-denial, or asceticism, or much praying, or much fasting, or much almsgiving, even if they really exist, are a test of truth. They may be found, and they have been found, in the authors of many a heresy and schism, and of revolt even from the moral laws of God, coupled with those hidden seeds of wilfulness, obstinacy, presumption, and pride, which are crimes no less than sensuality. Talent, learning, eloquence, you would not yourself look to. Providence, who knows our weakness, has not thus left us to the temptations of our own follies—has not trusted the criterion of truth to these inward marks, of which so many cannot be fully discerned, and so many must be liable to be mistaken by corrupt men: rather, he has sealed and marked his appointed servants with an external commission; and for this we must search. In judging this we are not liable to be deceived by our own prejudices, or by a morbid conscience. And now recall to your mind what has so often been urged to you on the comparative external commission of Romanism, and of the Church in England.”

“And yet,” said Lady Eleanor, “sanctity and truth cannot be separated.”

“Not real sanctity,” said Beattie, “not real truth. But Heaven has not confined the appointment of its ministers to holy men. Balaam prophesied, and Judas preached and wrought miracles;

and Scribes and Pharisees may sit in Moses's seat, and we may be bound to receive what they teach, though we may not do after their work. Such is the whole system of Providence. I waive the question now, whether the Romish Church be more holy than the English — whether those unhappy men within the English Church, to whom you appeal, and who, while they remain in the bosom of their mother, are treacherously reviling and betraying her, are marked by such signs of sanctity — that is, of humility, let us say — self-distrust, meekness, charity, as would constitute them safe guides of opinion. Whatever be the sanctity of such a communion, or of such men, it is no infallible test of a divine commission, as it would give no authority to preach, or to administer the Sacraments, without an outward call. O Lady Eleanor, let us not be deceived by this false plea, which has already torn the Church into sects, and is the very badge of that rationalism and dissent against which she must so earnestly strive."

"And yet," said Lady Eleanor, "even you have not blamed me, when I confessed that what I have seen myself in Hawkstone — the sanctity of this house for instance, the self-devotion and charity of its inmates, the dedication to religion of all the learning, and wealth, and labour, by which your own community has been restored and supported, and under the influence of which heresy and schism are vanishing from your neighbourhood — that all this has weighed deeply with me, and compelled me to think of the English Church in a light which it never wore, where I saw it only secularised and paralysed, and impotent for any great work of Christian love. I thought it could not bear such fruits as those which it bears here. Are not these marks of its truth?"

“ They are marks, assuredly,” said Beattie. “ We may rest on them jointly with others. They are great comforts, and consolations, and supports. But let us first rest our allegiance on a visible external commission. Even if the Church of England could exhibit no such fruits—even if it remained for ever maimed and mutilated in its most important organs, it might be still the duty of her children to remain in her bosom, or to return to her from a state of schism, and to endeavour to perfect her organisation, while they reverently acknowledged her authority, even in her state of weakness. Her deficiencies are the deficiencies of individuals; they are not parts of her system. As well might we estimate the authority of our Creator by the viciousness of men, who are his creatures, as the authority of a church by the sins of its members, so long as both Heaven and the Church, in all the formal promulgations of their law, protest against evil, and command holiness.”

Lady Eleanor remained silent, and Beattie continued.

“ And now,” he said, “ call to mind that in all this fearful conflict between truth and falsehood, still upon grand fundamental principles the whole of apostolical Christendom—the Eastern Church as well as the Romish, the Romish as well as the English—are solemnly agreed. All with one voice proclaim that Christ has founded one, and one Church only—all, that this Church is founded on the Apostles and Prophets—all, that with Divine revelation man may not dare to mix any thing that is human — all, that the Church, from the first day to the end of the world, must be governed by externally-commissioned rulers, preaching because they are sent, and preaching only what they receive—all, that without the pale of the Church there is no promise of

salvation, and that they who separate from it are guilty of a deadly sin, measured and punished in the sight of Heaven, like all other sins, by the degrees of light against which it has been committed. With these great truths acknowledged, a Christian, even in the midst of heresy and schism, cannot become an infidel. All that he has to guard against is the falling into either heresy or schism by departing from the apostolical doctrine, or from the apostolical polity of the Church. Thus far I am only stating the very principles under which you have been nurtured in Romanism. As you value your own soul, and the safety of the Church and of Divine truth, never abandon them. They are as valid and as true in the English as in the Romish Communion. The unity of the Church, the extinction of heresy, the suppression of schism, are objects not less dear to us, nay dearer than to any upholder of the papacy. And it is to save you from the guilt of schism, from helping to rend asunder the one unseamed garment of the Lord of Peace, that you are now called on to acknowledge the paramount claim of the English Church to your allegiance in this land.

“For the guilt of heresy I will for the present waive. I will lay aside all consideration of what, as an individual, I believe to be in the Romish system fearful corruptions of truth, criminal tamperings with the Divine ordinances—if not amounting wholly to formally declared heresy, at least filled with such a presumptuous and unevangelical spirit as to justify the name of Antichristian. Even though supported by the declarations of our own English Church, and by that of the East, and of all the reformed Episcopal communions, it is not necessary for us to sit in judgment on the sins of a sister church. If we were living in Rome, or in a

land where there was no Apostolical Church lawfully constituted and perpetuated, but one which acknowledged the Romish Supremacy, I should argue very differently. Then it would be necessary to examine the question of heresy—to consider what was corrupt and vicious in the doctrines and practice of that Romish Church of which Providence had made us members; to endeavour, by lawful, humble, and peaceful means, to change the hearts of our rulers, and to bring them to correct what was amiss; to obey them still in all things lawful; to refuse obedience only where our conscience, not leaning on itself, but supported by the external testimony of the primitive and other churches, denounced the act as criminal; and to submit without a murmur to any punishment which might be inflicted on us. This would be our course of proceeding if we were inhabitants of Rome.

“But in England the case is wholly different. Your first duty is to detach yourself from a state of schism, to place yourself under your lawful rulers, just as it is the first duty of a citizen, who has been seduced into rebellion, not to cavil at or criticise the laws, but to acknowledge the authority of his lawful sovereign. When this has been done, then we may proceed to examine what requires to be improved, and take legitimate means to improve it. And by what outward marks we know the English Church to be our lawful mother and mistress in this land you have often heard.”

Lady Eleanor answered, faintly, “Yes;” but she drew her hands over her eyes, as if a mist were hanging upon them, and sighed bitterly.

Beattie was deeply touched, and even alarmed. He almost proposed to himself to postpone the solemn ceremony, for which he had so long been

training her mind, and which she had so earnestly coveted. The sudden vacillation and misgiving struck him at first as inexplicable. But he reflected how fearful is the shock which unsettles our religious faith, especially one which uproots a system so deeply entwined as Romanism with the very life-strings of human nature. And Beattie also knew that near to us and about us are tempters, whom we cannot see, and to whom power may be permitted for a time to perplex and disturb the minds even of saints. He once more knelt down with her in prayer; for prayer is, he knew, the first and best (if not the only) solution of all doubts. And as he reached the close, touched by an affecting allusion, which brought before her the image of her Saviour mourning over the rending to pieces of his Church, she melted into tears, and a weight seemed to pass from her heart. She looked up, with her hands clasped fervently, her eyes lifted up to Heaven with intense devotion and gratitude. And as Beattie would have raised her from her knees, she shook her head, and bowed it upon her breast.

"No," she said, "it is gone—it is past. Blessed be His holy name! the dark hour is over. Strange that it should ever have visited me. But it is gone like a cloud. Alas! that I have sinned in doubt. Pray for me that I may be forgiven!"

And Beattie did pray. And at last, calmed and composed, Lady Eleanor rose from her knees, and meekly and humbly she asked Beattie if she might go over with him once more the grounds and reasons which had fortified her resolution to ask admission into the English Church.

"I am weak," she said; "and such hours as I have just passed (they are not the first) make me tremble when I am left alone. They seem to come

from without, as if some inward light was suddenly withdrawn, and a black cloud permitted to settle on me; and then it rises up and floats away, and all seems bright, and peaceable, and clear as ever."

"They are permitted," replied Beattie, "to visit even the most favoured servants of Heaven; and prayer is our only protection and refuge against them, and in our moments of calm and quiet to dwell again and again upon those truths and facts which are the reasonable foundation of our conduct. Remember what has so often been proved, that man may not dare to disturb either the doctrine or the ecclesiastical polity which has been positively established by an authority evidently Divine—that it was an acknowledged principle of ecclesiastical polity in the primitive ages, founded if not upon direct apostolical injunctions, at least upon the practice of the universal Church, as well as upon sound reason, that one bishop should not interfere with the diocese of another, or one patriarch with another's patriarchate. The œcumenical councils are full of intimations to this purpose. The supremacy which the Pope claims over all other bishops, and on which alone he rests his title to interfere with your lawful bishops and to withdraw your obedience, is confessed by his own adherents to have been no part of the primitive system of the Church for the first four centuries at least. It was not recognised by one half of Christendom, the Eastern Church, nor by the ancient British Church, nor by the ancient Irish Church; it was repudiated even by early popes as a badge and sign of Antichrist. It rests on no evidence, no commission,—on nothing but the assumption of Rome herself. Its gradual reception by the Western Churches can be traced step by step to motives and acts of human policy and short-sighted expediency. It made its

way in an age of darkness, in minds corrupted and deceived, when the criteria of historical truth were confessedly unknown and unpractised. Even then it encountered on all sides perpetual opposition and denial, especially in England, by which protests its rightfulness was contested, and even the title of modern prescription precluded. It is made by Rome an essential article of faith, but it is not found in any creed of the ancient Church, or in any part of the Bible, except as extracted from it by metaphors which might deduce anything from anything. It is enforced upon the mind, without having ever been defined, so as to become fixed and intelligible. Its extent is disputed even among Romanists themselves. It varies in different countries. It is made paramount to all questions of Divine truth. And if the power of human ministers of Heaven be recognised, Romanism cares little either for articles of doctrine or uniformity of worship. Rome would have sanctioned our Liturgy, if we would have acknowledged the supremacy.

“It has been from the beginning the fertile, essential, unceasing cause of rebellion and bloodshed. It originated the schism of one half of Christendom from the other, by compelling the Eastern Church to protest against a claim which went to invalidate the very foundations of the Christian faith. It resisted every attempt to reform the Church in the fifteenth century, and thus is justly chargeable with the heresies and blasphemies which followed the Reformation. Instead of unity, it has produced division; instead of peace, discord; instead of purity of doctrine, corruptions of the truth, which are known to be corruptions from having no sanction, either in apostolical tradition, or in the Scriptures, or in the analogy of faith. And thus it stands upon no ground whatever. either of apos-

tolical institution, or of primitive antiquity, or of expediency. And if we might then venture to examine it by the light of reason, it is contrary to the analogy of the Divine nature and operations, and exhibits rather a retrogression in the development of His revelations than an advance. It is virtually a restoration of Judaism. It wants every mark which our blessed Lord set upon his own divine commission and ministry; and the only pretended titles, which even itself exhibits, are the abuse of figurative language, historical falsehoods, and exploded forgeries.

“These proofs you have had set before you, as far as you have been capable of following them, and far enough to satisfy your mind that these assertions are deserving of confidence. But if Rome has no title to your allegiance, no ministers of the Church can have but those who derive their authority from an apostolical source. Once more revert to the historical proof that the bishops of England, at this day, are the regular legitimate successors of those to whom the Apostles committed the power of ordaining ministers in each church. The chain was not broken at the Reformation. In casting off the Romish yoke, and many superstitious practices which had crept in with it, they only exercised an undoubted right; they did not sever themselves from the Church, for to the ancient Catholic Church they reverted for the confirmation of their doctrine, and from it they derived their authority. They did not violate any positive institutions of Heaven: rather, in abjuring the papacy, and asserting the due independence of national churches, they restored the positive institutions of the Almighty, and once more secured the framework which he had created for the preservation of the truth, and which Rome had broken up and destroyed. Even

if, in the doctrines and practices which they then rejected, they had cast off any rashly, or introduced any erroneously, unless these errors were such as to destroy the essence of the Anglican Church as a branch of the Catholic Church, still our duty would be to remain within it, and to endeavour to correct what was amiss by legitimate efforts, rather than to throw ourselves into a schismatical body; just as we may not join the standard of an usurper because our lawful sovereign may, in some points, have abused his authority. But when you search for the changes which the English Church did make at the Reformation, can you find any which there touches its essence as a church, or any which, if then fatal, are not found even more flagrantly to have been practised in the Romish Church? Has not the English Church the creeds, the Scriptures, the Sacraments, the ministerial succession in all essential points, the same as the primitive Church? If the Reformation did in any way touch the chain of apostolical succession in the appointment of bishops, Rome has done the same in her interferences with their appointment. If it departed in any point from the primitive ministration of the holy Eucharist, Rome has departed farther. If the Reformation was attended by acts of extortion and robbery, what was the secular cause of the Reformation itself but the avarice of Rome? If it was effected by evil men in the laity, what has been the character of popes? If it was furthered by the interference of the civil arm, what has been the history of Rome but a perpetual toleration or complaint of the same interference? If in any way it encumbered the simplicity of the apostolic faith by the addition of dogmatic statements, what are the decrees of Trent and the creed of Pope Pius? If it has been followed by heresy and schism, what is the very

Reformation in the eyes of the Romish Church but a heresy and schism from itself? If it has left the English Church comparatively mutilated and weak, what is Rome herself compared with her former grandeur? If its system as a whole be a change from that of apostolical ages, what is the system of Rome? And if the motives of this change, as avowed by ecclesiastical authority, and therefore chargeable upon the Church as a church, be compared with the motives of Rome, is it better and more holy to struggle for the purification of a corrupted faith, or for the aggrandisement of worldly power? If England has sinned, she has sinned to release others from bondage; Rome to enslave others to herself."

Beattie paused. He had spoken slowly, deliberately, and calmly; and Lady Eleanor, with her eyes fixed on the ground, had drunk in his words with almost suspended breath. They were only the repetition of what she had often heard from him before. And now that the strange paroxysm under which she had laboured had passed away, they restored the whole tone of her mind; and she even wondered that any cloud of doubt should ever have come between her and the truth.

She thanked him fervently and reverently. And he then led her on to speak on her future plans, reminding her especially of the perils which attend a departure from one faith to another, where any self-indulgence is allowed to interfere as a motive, or to follow in its train.

"I know it," she said; "and my future course of life is fixed. We cannot suffer deeply and sharply without tearing up the ties which bind us to earth, whether they be memories or hopes. All that was bright in life is now to me dead and dull. And calm, and retirement, and hours for prayer, and in-

terests of Christian usefulness, are all that I now long for. For the future this will be my home. They have promised to receive me among them into this blessed and holy shelter. Whatever worldly advantages Providence has vouchsafed to me cannot be better employed than in ministering to their wants, and extending the sphere of their duties. And he——” But here she stopped, almost choked with her emotions. “Alas!” she resumed, after a pause, “lacerated and bleeding hearts, which have been passed through frightful ordeals of suffering and fear, are not made for happiness hereafter upon earth. Peace is all which they can hope for; and solitude, and silence, and tranquil communion with Heaven, all which they should covet.”

Beattie could not refrain from uttering a blessing over her head. “There is another,” he said, “who feels as you do, and rejoices that even in this you sympathise with himself. Even though separate on earth, hearts, and souls, and lives may be joined in communion in heaven. Blessed are you both, that no doubt or reviving thought of self mingles with the anxious pains of such a moment as the present—that you are fixed and steadfast in devoting all that Providence has given you to others, not to yourselves—that you would rather withdraw yourselves from each other in this life, to be united more closely in another, than risk the loss of peace of conscience, of heaven itself, by riveting again those earthly chains which Providence itself seems to have broken from you.”

“I could not,” said Lady Eleanor, “have done otherwise. I could not take the step on which I have resolved without making with it such a sacrifice as would prove to my own conscience that I was not acting from a motive of self-indulgence. Even the opinion of the world would have been

hard to face ; but there is that within which it is harder still to brave. No, let such an act as this be at least clear, even from the suspicion of self-interest and self-deceit before both Heaven and man."

Once more Beattie gave her his blessing, and prepared to take his leave, promising to be with her the next day, some little time before the bishop would arrive at the Béguinage, in the little chapel of which he had promised to admit Lady Eleanor into the communion of the Church, at the same time that he administered the right of confirmation to some of the younger females, who were dwelling within its walls, partly under its shelter from the world, and partly as receiving education from its inmates. As he left the room he met upon the stairs one of the Sisters, who was coming out of a little suite of rooms appropriated to an infirmary for poor women. It was one whom we have long lost sight of, but not forgotten—our good friend Mabel,—active, energetic, devoted, unselfish as ever, but now quiet, regular, self-disciplined, trained in habits of obedience and order, and reaping the fruits of a well-directed enthusiasm in the affectionate respect of all the inmates of the house, who owed to her zealous co-operation with Mrs. Bevan no small a portion of their happiness and comfort. She was followed by a female, in a dress not unlike her own, but slightly distinguished from it. And as her pale, care-worn, but still beautiful face looked up at Beattie with eyes in which at times there seemed to wander some strange memories of past scenes, some fitful glances of a disturbed reason, Beattie stopped to address her. He called her by her name, Margaret, inquired for her health kindly ; and poor Margaret, colouring and abashed, yet grateful for his notice, answered him with reverence. She had been received into the house only a few

weeks since, on the recovery of her reason, and on her removal from the asylum in which she had been placed. An outcast upon the world, destitute of all friends, of all means of support, scarcely recovered from the shock of her long illness, her intellect still weak, her feelings lacerated, she was driven by necessity out of the shelter of the asylum, to die of starvation. Mrs. Bevan had found her seated under the little archway of the Béguinage, one bitterly cold evening — sitting there without speaking, without asking for help, afraid to make her name known lest the sad memory of one sin, long since repented of, should still steel the hearts and shut the doors of her fellows against her. And when her story was known, she had been admitted into the shelter of the holy house, there to make perfect her repentance, and to become, as penitents should become, the servant and menial of those who had not sinned as she had.

Beattie was still speaking to her, when a violent knocking was heard at the gate, and a demand followed for immediate admission from a rude voice, agitated apparently by passion, yet affecting composure and gentleness.

CHAPTER XXII.

BEFORE we can explain the cause of the rude knocking at the gate of the Béguinage, we must return once more to the little green gate in the lane of Hawkstone, which conducted into the garden of the Reverend P. O'Foggarty, and we must enter even into that gentleman's study. He was sitting there in company with the mendicant, whom we left last in the chapel of the Priory. There were words and expostulations of harsh and angry import, fierce recriminations, mutual charges, violence of gesture—every thing which could imply a meeting between men engaged in some deep plot, and disappointed of their object by the awkwardness or mismanagement of one of the parties.

Awkwardness and mismanagement, indeed, there had been on the part of Mr. O'Foggarty. Notwithstanding his general blandness of demeanour, which indicated acquaintance with the world, he possessed little of that real knowledge of human nature for which Pearce was so remarkable. And in particular, he had been totally unable to understand or appreciate, and still more unable to direct, a mind of such exquisite delicacy and refinement as Lady Eleanor's. He had scarcely undertaken the office of her spiritual adviser, and established himself at Lord Claremont's in the place of the good Abbé St. Maur, than she perceived the difference between them, and penetrated through the veil of assumed courteousness and liberality which he had thought it politic to assume. St. Maur, in all his

ministrations and reasonings, had exhibited the Catholic rather than the Romanist. His holiness, his simplicity, his charity, true copies of many a noble and saintly character reared in the bosom of the Gallican Church, and preserved as by an atmosphere of personal piety from the contagion of the evil system of the papacy, had prevented the intrusion of a single doubt into Lady Eleanor's mind. She contrasted his self-devotion, his obedience to his Church, his fasts, his alms, his prayers, his reverence for antiquity, the firm and unwavering character of his belief, his recognition of authority and guidance in all his opinions and ministrations, with the selfishness, the individualism, the indulgence, the secularity, the bustle, the modern frivolity, the lawless speculations and arrogant presumption which prevailed in all that she saw of the religious world of Protestantism. For into the deeper recesses of the Church of England she was not able to penetrate. Its real saints, its noblest children, shrink from the public eye. They do not appear upon platforms, or congregate at meetings, or talk loudly, or write boldly. And of that which was obtruded upon her sight, even in the Church of England, too much partook of a tone which jarred upon her delicacy, and, to speak most gently, failed to satisfy her yearnings for a calm, lofty, ethereal spirit of unworldliness and devotion. Moreover, all the harsher and more dubious points of the Romish system, St. Maur had softened down and veiled from her eyes—not artfully, not hypocritically, but by the innocence of his own mind. Its intrusive, intriguing proselytism became, in his hands, zeal for the propagation of the faith; its stern, sanguinary despotism, firmness in defence of the truth; its idolatry, a healthy stimulus of a fervent adoration; its blasphemous worship of the blessed Virgin,

a holy and reverent affection towards an image of purity and bliss, transcendant above all human imaginations; its bold tampering with the creeds and the Sacraments, and the polity of the Apostles, an economy of prudence and necessity; and its rationalism and presumption in speaking above what is written, a reverent care to extinguish controversies and satisfy doubts. So it is with those who see only the one side, the illuminated phase of the Papacy.

But O'Foggarty's was a different mind. Worldly, and unchastened in heart, he had been drilled into the Popish system under hands which cared for little but the preservation of an exterior, and for a prudent policy. He had been taught controversy in that cold, hard, unspiritual form, which it assumes in the polemics of men whose object is not truth, but conquest. And, instead of that single eye, which, looking outward, sees all things inward by a faculty of instinctive wisdom, they had initiated him in a theory of policy and of human nature, carefully constructed upon technical rules, in which the heart had no place—nothing was left to the full course and impulse of good affections—all was calculated—all artificial—all full of self-consciousness and self-interest. With him, even the worst features of the Papacy, however dissembled before others, came out, and were enforced in his private communications as parts of the system, all bound together by the one stern bond of infallibility and supremacy. And the most delicate and perilous of all his religious ministrations, that in which art and system can have the least place, and in which no technical skill can atone for the want of a chastened heart and singleness of mind—the confessional—assumed, in his hands, a form so utterly repulsive, that Lady Eleanor was compelled to retire from it.

O'Foggarty saw his mistake, and, instead of enforcing her obedience, succumbed to her resistance, and offered to accommodate himself to her wishes. From that moment the spell of his authority was broken. Only a few days afterwards, Charles Bevan, as rector of the parish, had visited Lord Claremont. He had seen both the Earl and Lady Eleanor, and without hesitation or circumlocution he had reminded them of his own spiritual authority over them as their legitimate parish priest; and warned them against the sin of schism; had offered to lay before them the titles on which his claim was rested; and had also, on a second visit, declared his determination, with the consent of his bishop, deliberately to sever from the Church, by the act of the Church, all those within the parish who obstinately and wilfully should refuse to submit to instruction, and should continue in schism, and to proceed to a formal excommunication.

It was a bold, and many would have thought it a rash step. But Bevan was well advised. He had resolved that he would not remain in the painful position in which many of his brethren had been placed, by being compelled to recognize as children of the Church, and to perform the most solemn offices of the Church for, those who were in open rebellion against her. He felt acutely the mockery and ridicule thus cast on the most awful ministrations of the Church; the contempt thus poured upon the clergy; the blindness and hardness of heart in respect to the guilt of schism, which was thus encouraged in the ignorant and weak; and the total confusion and destruction which was threatened to the very nature and being of a Church. His bishop had promised to support him; and after a formal and distinct endeavour to obtain a hearing for his instruction, those whose minds appeared ob-

stinate and incorrigible, he resolved solemnly to excommunicate.

The effect of this boldness upon Lady Eleanor, as upon nearly all other schismatics in the parish, was startling. It made them reflect. It was the assertion of an authority, of which they had never dreamed. It was the appearance of the Church of England in a wholly new light, invested with privileges which could only belong to an ambassador of Heaven, and the very claim of which, boldly and unhesitatingly made, was in itself an evidence of their truth. O'Foggarty met the menace with laughter and ridicule. But Bevan's calmness, firmness, solemnity, and depth of thought strongly impressed Lady Eleanor. She did not refuse to see him again. Lord Claremont fell into his last sickness; and she was left more at liberty to think and to study. And though in her rare communications with Villiers he studiously avoided the subject, she could not but see in him an example and image of the Church, to which she recurred in every doubt, and which attracted her reverence, while Bevan's arguments acted on her reason. Neither was she without another image of the English Church, another proof of the energy which it could develope and the holiness which it could generate, in the two religious communities now rising into maturity under her own eye. Little had she supposed that the English Church could ever create societies for prayers, for alms-giving, for fasting, for meditation. She visited frequently the little sisterhood of the Béguinage; and there, at her own request, Mrs. Bevan placed her in communication with Beattie; whose age was greater, and his learning deeper, and his character more formed than Bevan's; and the work was accomplished. O'Foggarty retired in despair.

"And this, then," said the mendicant to him, "is the end of your soft ways and delicate words." And as he spoke his lips curled upwards with a bitter sneer.

O'Foggarty was silent.

"You have lost him," continued Pearce, "and estranged her. And your chapel is unfinished, and your school deserted, and you yourself driven to quit the place from mere lack of support. Did I not tell you it would be so?"

O'Foggarty still sat silent, with a vexed and angry air.

"You have ruined every thing," said Pearce. "Why did you not join the new Union Anti-religious Distinction School, the one on the Irish plan, that the Government has set up? That would have done something for us."

"I did," replied O'Foggarty; "I joined it from the first, and was one of the petitioners for it."

"And why did not you make use of it, then?" said Pearce.

"I did," answered the other. "I got one of our own Catholics appointed to the mastership; and every thing was going on well; only Villiers found out that I said mass in the schoolroom, and had brought over two of the young heretics to come to chapel. I got the school built close by the gate for that very reason; and he complained, and the board were obliged to dismiss the man."

"And then you gave it up?" asked Pearce, contemptuously.

"I did not," replied the other, in anger; "I sent all my boys there, and drilled them thoroughly, and taught them how to attack the young heretics in play-hours, and what to say; and several of them came over to us in consequence. And I watched every word the new schoolmaster said; and if he

uttered a syllable about religion, or any thing connected with the church, I threatened to bring him before the commissioners, so that he was frightened, and shut up his mouth. One day, when our bishop, the Bishop of Eliopolis, came to look at the school, one of the Protestant boys asked the master which was the true bishop, the bishop who confirmed him, or the Bishop of Eliopolis; and the master had the impudence to say it was the bishop who confirmed him. I had him up before the commissioners instantly, and he got soundly reprimanded for introducing peculiar doctrines; and was ordered to tell the boys that he did not know, and that he had been under a mistake; and that both were the right bishops. But this could not last long; for the boys went on asking him questions—what they were to think about this and about that; and he was obliged to tell them he did not know any thing about it, that the manuscripts differed, or rather that he knew very well, but the government did not know, or had not made up their mind, and would not allow him to tell them. At last there came a hot-headed curate, and he began drilling his boys in controversy, as I did mine, as the only way of saving them from corruption. And then the young ones used to fight and abuse each other all play-hours, notwithstanding the fine exhortation to love and peace, as papists and heretics, and I know not what. At last Bevan came to the living, and he took away all his boys at once, and would not allow one of them to go near the place; so it was not my fault that the school did not answer for us.”

Pearce sat moodily, with his hands before his eyes. “And to-morrow, you say,” he exclaimed, “she is to apostatise formally?”

“Yes,” answered O’Foggarty, “in the chapel of that Protestant Béguinage.”

“It cannot be, it never shall be!” exclaimed the mendicant, striking the table with his clenched hand; “she does it that she may marry *him*. Who would trust a woman’s faith, or care for a woman’s doctrine? She is resolved to marry him at last, and that is why she apostatises. But I have sworn that they never shall be one; I have that which can stop it even now.”

And he rose up passionately, seized his hat, and scarcely wishing O’Foggarty good night, he hurried into the street.

The cold wind howled round him as he reached the open air, but the infuriated man felt it not upon his burning forehead. A man was standing at a little distance, who had apparently been waiting for him. And Pearce made a sign for him to approach. It was Connell. Even in the paroxysm of passion, the cool calculating mind of the mendicant had prepared for the worst. He had brought Connell with him, as a tool always ready in his hand, and whose testimony he might require, and who had learnt in his own country to care little for the solemnity of an oath when he could evade it by some vain form, or stifle conscience by a plea of serving his church. And now he bade the wretched man follow him, and watch what might happen. If he should be detained — if any sign of mischief should appear, Connell had his instructions ready. Pearce had prepared against this during the few hours which he had spent up in the Forest, in that mysterious house surrounded by high dead walls, to which he had conducted his young fellow-traveller, and in which that fellow-traveller was now immured, and almost kept prisoner against his will, till the time for action should arrive. Once more Pearce had assumed the direction of a deep-laid, long-plotted, insurrectionary movement among the

turbulent population of the district. The trains had all been laid, and all was ready for explosion at a given moment.

"Follow me," he said to Connell; "wait a little distance off. If I am detained—if you see any sign of policemen, ascertain what they are about; and if I am in danger, hasten off to the Forest." Connell withdrew a little way; and Pearce, once more abandoning himself to the full tide of his passion, hurried on.

He strode along the pavement, and nearly threw down a miserable old woman who was crawling home with a few sticks, which she had picked up to light a cheerless momentary blaze in her wretched hovel. Pearce only answered her cry of fear with a ferocious curse. He came in front of the house where he lodged before; and as he passed, though it was dark, he slouched his hat over his face. The unfinished pinnacles of the Romish chapel caught his eye, and once more he uttered a dreadful imprecation. Then he stopped, and felt in a secret pocket for a packet of papers; and by the light of a gas-lamp he looked over them, and saw that they were right.

"It can be prevented," he muttered to himself, "even now. Here is the certificate of the marriage: I can swear—swear that she is still alive, and then there can be no other marriage. They swear in the House of Commons and do not mind it. I can get those who will face it out. It does not signify—a mere oath. O'Connell swore that he would not hurt the Church; they all swear the same; and then they vote for its destruction. No one dares to call it perjury. What is perjury but a name? and it is all for the good of the faith. She will not change, if she cannot marry—I know that; and she cannot marry, if the first wife is alive."

And the mendicant drew up his figure, and stood for a moment exultingly, as if recovered from his defeat and sure of victory. But a sudden chill, he knew not how, fell upon him — a dreary blank, as if all was in vain ; and something of a mysterious, superstitious horror, as if a cloud of vengeance long overcharged above his head were about to burst upon him. He staggered, and leaned against the lamp-post. And at that moment two men came round the corner, bearing something upon their shoulders ; it was black, oblong, hollow — and Pearce saw that it was a coffin. He shrunk back as it passed, lest it should touch him ; and then to recover himself from a shock which it had given him, he hurried on.

“ I can swear,” he muttered to himself, “ that she is still living — in Italy or Naples. It will take time, at least, to clear it up ; and in time something else may happen. If she will only listen to me — will but put it off. I can make up a story that he deserted her — was cruel to her — that she ran away from him — and then that he pretended she was dead to deceive his father. Any thing will do — any thing for the present. I can swear.”

And as he uttered the last word he reached the arched gateway of the Béguinage ; he stopped. Hardened as he was, almost blinded with the wild struggle of baffled and desperate revenge, he yet felt one last expiring pang of remorse and fear — a fear undefined and superstitious, but which made him shudder. The churchyard lay before him ; its wan tombstones gleaming like spectres in the pale light of a waning moon. And amongst them he saw a figure watching steadfastly, silently, moving not, but with a shadowy hand lifted up as if ready to seize him. Was it a vision of his fevered blood ? He rubbed his eyes, but in vain ; the figure was still there. He had forgotten Connell. Almost mad-

dened with a conflict of passions, he rang the bell furiously. Then he recovered himself sufficiently to request admittance to see Lady Eleanor, on the most urgent business; and he assumed a voice of feigned composure and gentleness. The wicket gate was opened after a little delay to allow Beattie to pass out, while Pearce himself was admitted to wait in the little lodge, until Lady Eleanor's pleasure could be known. But scarcely had he passed through the gate, and the lamp which burnt within had flashed upon his face, than the female who had opened the wicket uttered a loud shriek, and called him by his name. It was the voice of poor Margaret; and Margaret had recognised him — recognised the man whom she had always regarded in her mind as the tempter and destroyer of her husband.

“Stop him!” she cried to Beattie. “That is the man — seize him!” And before Pearce could make a movement, Beattie had closed the wicket, and seized the key. There was no escape.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THERE stands at one angle of the north side of the cloister of Hawkstone Priory a square projecting tower adjoining the chapel, and apparently communicating with some of those secret passages with which its walls are perforated. Traditions were rife in the neighbourhood of subterraneous openings into vaults and crypts below; and a legend is still current of a tale of blighted affection, in which one of the ancient inmates of the Priory was supposed to have retired into its shelter after the loss of a dear-loved wife, a member of the Villiers family, and to have built this tower adjoining to her last resting-place in the Villiers vault, that he might solace himself with her memory, and even, as it was said, might pass, unperceived, his hours of prayer and nightly vigils close to her remains, even in the vault itself. Only one or two persons were supposed to be acquainted with the secret of these mysterious passages, which were hidden in the face of the wall by large slabs of stone, turning upon pivots, and opening by secret springs. And the secret had been turned to account by the insurrectionary agents, who had planned the disturbances in the Forest, and who had thus been enabled to deposit securely the arms which they were preparing and collecting. When Villiers had restored the Priory, he had allowed this tower, as well as every other part which he could retain, to stand untouched.

But the low vaulted chamber, which formed its

lowest portion, had scarcely ever been occupied. It was gloomy, chilly, lighted only by two narrow lancet windows perforated in the thickest part of the wall. And even when a sunbeam penetrated into it, and fell upon the rough stone floor, it seemed as if it had lost its way, and would fain have struggled back into the outer air.

The Priory clock had just tolled twelve that night, and all but a few inmates of the Priory were asleep, when a light glimmered at the end of the cloisters, and five figures appeared. Two of them were officers of justice, and they led between them a third, habited like a mendicant. He was not handcuffed, or chained, but his every movement was watched lest he should attempt an escape; and his dogged, gloomy, ferocious, but desperate expression of countenance showed that he had abandoned all hopes of it. Those who bore the lanterns were Beattie himself and Cookesley. The low arched door of the tower, ribbed with strong oak, and massive with nails, was opened. The miserable prisoner was led into the chamber; a dreary, cheerless fire was kindled on the unused hearth; a single candle placed on a rude table in the middle, and a bed having been made up for him in one corner, Pearce was left to himself. The door was double-locked on the outside, and the officers took up their post for the night at the entrance of the prisoner's chamber.

As the massive door slammed heavily, and rang through the vaulted room, the wretched man sank down upon a chair before the fire. His hat fell from his head, and his hands dropped loosely by his side. He was seemingly paralysed. Up to the present moment all his plots and intrigues had been permitted, by a forbearing, long-suffering Providence, to work almost without obstruction; his

calculations had all succeeded ; he had become almost careless and rash from repeated success. That he should now have fallen into a snare, blind-folded—that, within walls where he conceived no one could have known him, he should have been instantly recognised—that seeming accident should have brought together Beattie and Bevan, at the moment when it was necessary to give orders for his detention—and that Cookesley himself should be at hand to identify him, and connect him with the previous outbreak, which he had been suspected of contriving, and for which warrants at the time had been issued for his apprehension,—all this was so startling and surprising to him, that it seemed as if the hand of vengeance were suddenly bared to smite him, and a cloud were rolled away, revealing to him his past crimes and his approaching punishment. One o'clock struck, two o'clock, and three o'clock, still he sat in the same position, motionless. At last the fire was dying out, and a cold chill compelled him to move and trim it ; and the movement in some degree broke his stupor, and restored him to reason. He looked round the low room to see if there was any means of escape, but on each side was a solid wall. The narrow lancets prohibited all egress, and even they were barred. He climbed up to them, on a wooden settle, but could see nothing without ; but just as he was descending from the one which looked into the outer side of the cloister, and hung over the little brook, he was startled by hearing a tap on the glass. He stopped breathless. The tap was repeated, and though superstitiously terrified at first, he moved, as by a species of fascination, to the window. A small pane in the lattice was shaken and moved. Presently it was carefully taken out, and a hand was thrust in, holding a note.

"Is that you, Connell?" whispered Pearce.

"It is I, sir," was the answer. "But hush, for they are watching in the cloister."

"How did you find me out?" whispered Pearce.

"I watched the lights in the rooms all out, and when this one remained burning, I thought it might be you, and so I crept round, and climbed up to look in. I have sent up to the Forest; they will be here as soon as they can. The man has just come back." Pearce took the note, and tore it open. And once more his countenance lighted up, and his energy seemed to revive. "As soon as they can," he muttered. "It must be at once. They have their men ready. To-morrow I may be sent anywhere. Go back," he said to Connell; "go back instantly. Tell them where I am. Let there be no delay, or all will be lost. Let them come with all their strength. If I am not rescued in a few hours they will be ruined." He had spoken incautiously loud, and the step of one of the policemen moved to the door. Pearce made signs to Connell to retire; and throwing himself once more upon the chair, he gave himself up to thought. "All may be saved still," he muttered. "We have escaped from worse things even than this. They must be here to-morrow—to-morrow by noon at farthest." And, as if his mind was relieved, he threw himself on the bed. But he was unable to sleep. He tossed and started in an agony of alarm at every sound, till the daylight had pierced into the room. At last, worn out and exhausted, he took from his pocket a strong opiate, which of late years he always carried about him, and sank into a profound sleep. He dreamt that he was standing on a rock, which looked down upon a blue expanse of sea, fringed with a line of marble palaces, and crowned with a smoke-wreathed mountain. He saw a boat floating upon

the waters, and in it two forms, radiant with youth, and loveliness, and happiness. And as he turned from the sight he saw, standing by his side, a black and demon figure, at the very sight of whom the bitterness of envy and malice gushed into his heart. He thought that the Evil Being lifted him up by the hair of his head, and bore him over the waters, following in the wake of that little boat which danced gladly along the silver ripple. The arms of that angel pair were circled round each other, and together they bent them over a sleeping babe, dropping even tears of joy upon its innocent and slumbering face.

Suddenly the Evil Being swooped down upon them like a vulture, and tore the child from their arms; and the boat sank under the eddying water, with a hollow shriek. But the child was now lying in the hands of the dreamer; and, as he looked on it, its features changed, its eye-balls became distorted, its colour livid, its hands matted with hair, and armed with claws; and it sprang up and clasped him round the neck, and dragged him down—down—down—an infinite depth—a depth of darkness and horror; and the waves of the sea surged up with hollow roars to catch him as he fell: they closed over him—they boomed above his head. He would have shrieked out, but the horrible monster clung round his neck, and choked and strangled him. Down—down—lower and lower, deeper and deeper—they sank together! And he gasped in agony; but still the monster grappled him, and lay with his grim ghastly eyes staring fiercely into his. There was a roaring around him, as of innumerable torrents, shrieks, and screams, the thundering of many waters, the hiss of ocean serpents, the wild unearthly cries of demons in agony calling to him by name, and bidding him welcome to their place

of torture. He sprang up—every hair upon his head standing erect with terror, and the sweat ready to drop from his forehead. Was it all a dream, or was it real? There were the noises still—the fearful sounds, shrieks, and screams, and cries of terror, and voices like those of fiends calling on him by name; and his head swam, and he sank back upon his pillow. But again he sprang up in terror. There was thundering at the door of the tower; and once more he heard his own name repeated; and he leaped from the bed, and remembered where he was, and all that had passed. He looked round, and saw faces leaping, and climbing up at the narrow windows; and a cheer of triumph rose up when Connell tore away the glass, and they could see Pearce himself. “Make haste, sir,” he cried, “make haste; there is no time to lose—we are here—we have got possession of the place—but they are coming—the yeomanry will be here in a few minutes. You must come out at once, or it will be too late.”

“Break open the door,” exclaimed Pearce; “how can I get out without this?”

“We cannot,” said Connell; “it is locked. The policemen are killed; and we cannot find the keys: they are battering it now.” And at the same moment the massive oaken door, riveted with iron, and imbedded deeply on its ponderous hinges, shook from top to bottom with a tremendous crash.

“Cannot you get out here?” asked a voice at the window; and a rough hand endeavoured, at the same time, to tear away the iron stanchions. But they defied the effort even of the gigantic muscular gripe which essayed to move them. Pearce answered by a laugh of derision and impatience. “Break down the door,” he said; “it is all that you can do.” And once more the door tottered, and

bent inward beneath another shock. Again and again the battery was brought to bear upon the massive oak; one of the solid panels was split from top to bottom, and light could be seen through it; and one of the hinges had been forced more than an inch from its bed in the solid stone: a few more blows would accomplish its destruction. And Pearce, in an agony of impatience, now by oaths and execrations, and now with entreaties, was urging the clamorous throng without to bring to bear upon it the whole of their strength, ignorant that only a few hands at a time could be employed in battering the door, and that the narrowness of the cloister embarrassed their efforts. Still there was little more to be done. Another crash was heard, and the upper staple was all but forced from the wall, when a loud cheer was heard on the outside of the Priory, responded to by a wild, irregular, confused cry, partly of fear, and partly of defiance, from the party within the walls. And to Pearce's terror and dismay, he heard the cry ring through the cloisters—"The yeomanry are come; save yourselves!" And the next moment a heavy weight fell upon the stone pavement; and the sound of flying feet was followed by a dead silence at the door.

"They have abandoned me," he cried. "Traitors! cowards! villains! they have left me to my fate. Fool that I was to depend upon such cowards!" And he rushed to the door, and endeavoured with a convulsive effort to tear it from its hinges, but it resisted all his attempts. Then he laid his face to the key-hole, and tried to see what was passing without; but the cloister, one whole side of which was commanded by the door, was empty. Beyond it there were cries and clamours, as of a deadly conflict. Shots were fired—shrieks and screams of the wounded, mingled with cheers of triumph;

but which side was victorious he could not know. Then along the other end of the cloister came dropping back, one by one, a few of the rioters, wounded, bleeding—some of them mutilated—more than one lying down to die on the stone pavement. There was another cheer, and the rear, as it were, of a dense body appeared at the farthest end, retreating, fighting as it were their ground inch by inch. They wavered, gave way, fell into confusion; at last the whole mass turned, and fled precipitately in every direction. And the bayonets of soldiers, and the glittering of the yeomanry equipments, flashed through the vaulted cloister.

Once more the insurgents rallied on the open green sward round which the cloister ran, and which was not built up towards the south. They formed themselves into a dense body, seemingly under the marshalling and direction of one leader. He was young, fair-haired, his features delicately formed, his bearing full of grace and spirit, his eye lighted up with animation; and, but for the lines of premature vice and profligacy deeply engraven on his countenance, his face would have formed a study for a painter. He it was who rallied the routed fugitives; and, armed with a sabre which he had wrested from one of the yeomanry, whom he had dragged from his horse to the ground, and left dead with two gashes upon his head, he defied the advancing military. The next moment, round the south side of the cloister, was heard the charge of the yeomanry. They halted, reined up their horses in front of the rallied party, and their commander, a tall and noble figure, with a voice of thunder, summoned the insurgents to lay down their arms, and surrender themselves prisoners.

“Never!” cried the youth, “never, while we have life!” and he sprang up and seized the bridle

of Villiers's charger with one hand, while with the other he aimed at Villiers himself a deadly and tremendous blow. At that moment, if any eye could have penetrated into the vaulted room, and have beheld Pearce as he gazed through the fractured crevices, they would have seen his face for one moment turn white as ashes. Every particle of blood seemed to have forsaken it; every movement and pulse of life to be suspended. His eyeballs were fixed. His hands grasped convulsively the iron ring of the door, as if they would have bitten into the metal. Then he sprang up with a cry of madness. Villiers had swayed himself to avoid the blow, and with one stroke dashing his assailant's weapon from his hand, he raised himself in his stirrups, and his sword whirled round like lightning, and descended upon a head, which it clove asunder, and covered the horse and its rider with blood and brains.

It was the head, not of the youthful assailant, but of a haggard, savage, bloated, yet miserable-looking ruffian, who had thrown himself in the way, that he might ward off the blow from the head of his foster-child. Irishmen never forget their children. And he had even inflicted a severe wound upon the horseman himself. But his body fell to the ground; and at the same moment Villiers recovered himself, and once more grasping his sword, prepared to prostrate his young antagonist, who had only retired a few paces to renew the combat more fiercely from the loss of the miserable Connell. But at that moment the oak-ribbed door of the vaulted room, already half torn from its hinges, fell with a crash. The prisoner within it had thrown himself upon it with the desperation and strength of a maniac. He tore it from its staples, plunged across it with a cry that made even the combatants turn round.

But at the next spring, which he made into the cloister, he fell back, staggering against the wall, and the blood gushed from his body. The order to fire had been given to the soldiers, and amidst the thunder of the discharge, the volumes of smoke and tongues of flame, a ball, irregularly aimed, had glanced from the stone-work of the cloister, and struck him to the ground. It was an accident—such an accident as Providence usually employs in executing his justest vengeance.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THREE weeks had passed from that fearful day. It was midnight. And in that vaulted cell, stretched upon a bed of torture, racked with his wounds, pale, haggard, his beard uncut, his hair matted, his eyes bloodshot and full of a malignant fire, while his lips quivered with fear at every sound, the miserable Pearce was lying. His senses had now returned after a long delirium of fever, during which he had made the hair of his attendants stand on end, and many of them refuse to remain with him at night, by the horrible phantasms and spectres which haunted his maddened brain. He imagined himself already in the place of torment; and even the water with which they endeavoured to assuage his burning thirst seemed to him as molten lead, administered to him by the hands of demons. Unable to be moved to prison, he had been watched over by the inmates of the Priory with the tenderest care. And by the skill of Cookesley himself his life had been saved. But it had been wholly impossible to extract from him any information, or even to question him, on any matters which might exasperate or alarm him. Beattie and Bevan alone had been awakened to some suspicion that he was implicated not only in the insurrectionary movements of the Forest, but also, in some mysterious way, with the disappearance of Villiers's child. But Villiers himself had received a most serious wound, which confined him to his room. The rioters had been driven off before they could effect

their purpose of setting fire to the Priory, especially to the chapel, as Pearce had carefully suggested. Within the chapel all had been gathered who could not join in the defence, and not a hair of their heads had been injured. But Villiers himself, while in the act of levelling his sabre upon the bare head of his young assailant, had suddenly swooned with loss of blood, and had ever since been lying under the same roof within a few yards of that chamber of agony, in which the destroyer of his peace and of his child was suffering the tortures of the damned.

Pearce had just awakened from a terrifying dream, and, to his consternation, he found that the cell was in darkness. Darkness to him was as a hell; and again and again he had besought his nurse never to leave him: but now, during his sleep, she had been called away; and after sitting up in dismay and terror, he sank back upon his pillow, almost doubting where he was. He was endeavouring to stare through the darkness, and recognise the place, when his eye was rivetted by a sound, and by the appearance of a slender thread of blue light on the wall immediately facing him. It widened, became more vivid, and, to his inexpressible horror, he saw the wall itself open, and a bright light pour in through it, behind which, almost senseless as he was with terror, he could discern a dark, shapeless, shadowy figure advancing to him. He uttered a hideous shriek, and would have buried himself in his bed-clothes; but the figure moved to his side, and called him by his name. It was a voice which he knew.

“Silence,” it said, “or you will ruin all. What are you afraid of? It is only I, O’Foggarty.”

Pearce could not recover his breath. His heart beat as if it would suffocate him, and his lips quivered, so that he could not articulate.

"Why, I should never have thought," said his nocturnal visitant, "that you of all men were afraid of ghosts." And he laughed scornfully.

"I have been ill," faltered Pearce. "But what do you want? How did you get here?"

"You," answered the other—"you of all men not to know how I got here! You not to be acquainted with all these old secret passages which have been useful to you before this in some of your former proceedings, as they will be useful to you now! Who are such proper persons to know all the contrivances of these old places as the persons to whom they once belonged, and to whom they must belong again? I have only just got the clue from abroad, and I have found you out without difficulty. Do you remember that hollow in the rock, by the bank of the brook, just by the great Wyche-elm, where the thorn-bushes are so thick? There is a regular passage cut under ground, from this room into the Villiers vault, and through that out into the open air. Only you must understand the springs, and how to move the stones in the walls."

"Then I can escape," cried Pearce, springing up in the bed with recovered energy, and resuming all his vigour of mind—"and at once?"

"At once," said O'Foggarty. "Slip on your clothes, take my arm; there is a horse waiting for you out by the Prior's oak in the wood; and in two hours you will be in the Forest, safe. And we shall be safe too; for it would not be very pleasant to have you in their hands—with the prospect of your telling all you know." And O'Foggarty's sneer indicated how little confidence he reposed in the honour of his confederate.

"And what of Villiers?" asked Pearce, impatiently. "Is he alive? They would tell me nothing; and I have told them nothing. Where is he? Has

he found out any thing? Did he——” and the wretch hesitated—“Was any one killed?”

O’Foggarty shrank back, as horror-struck. At last he said, with a low voice, “You have had your revenge. It is all over,—but not with his sword.”

Pearce sank back on his pillow, and gasped convulsively.

“How was it?” he muttered. “Tell me all. Let me know all. Revenge is sweet. Tell it me all. I can bear it; and yet I have lost what was mine—all but mine. I should have had his money.”

“He is not dead yet,” said O’Foggarty. “He dies to-morrow. As I came out of Broughton they were erecting the gallows. Villiers has killed him.”

“How—how?” exclaimed Pearce, greedily. “Does he know it? He shall know it—know it when it is too late. And my foot shall be set upon his neck. Oh, what a triumph!” And his eyes glared like a demon’s. “But tell me all—tell me this minute.” And he clutched O’Foggarty’s hand, who seemed afraid to move under his grasp, so completely had Pearce obtained a fascination over all who had once been brought under his influence.

“I will,” said O’Foggarty. “But do not crush me so hard; you will make the blood come.”

“Ay, blood—blood!” muttered Pearce. “But tell me.”

“He was brought up for trial this day,” said O’Foggarty. “I was in court at Broughton all the time. There was no evidence scarcely against him. They did not know where he came from,—could not identify him,—did not know his name scarcely, for he had been as silent as you have been ever since he had been taken, and would not utter a word. He behaved like a man, nobly. Oh, Mr.

Pearce, have you not ruined a spirit which in other hands would have been ——”

“Silence!” exclaimed Pearce, fiercely. “How dare you speak to me of what I choose to do, as much for the good of the Church as for my own revenge? Go on at once, — tell me all.”

And O’Foggarty proceeded. “The judge talked of stopping the trial — said that the evidence was not enough; and the poor fellow looked up then at last, as if he had not been really so indifferent about it as he affected to be. And I do believe there were many in the court besides myself who would have been glad of his escape. He looked worn and haggard. But he has a noble face, Pearce. What a man he might have made!”

“Go on,” cried Pearce exasperated.

“I will,” replied the other. “But had you not better keep quiet? Your nails have cut your hands.”

“Go on,” repeated Pearce.

And O’Foggarty proceeded. “We all thought he was safe, when the Attorney-General, who was for the prosecution, rose and said, that if the evidence was not sufficient, they must then be under the painful necessity of calling another witness, who had been interested in the criminal, when a boy, from having saved his life in a fire, and who had therefore entreated to be spared from appearing if his evidence was not absolutely necessary.”

“He did not know it all, then!” exclaimed Pearce, impatiently. “How did he find out about the fire?”

“The gaoler had learnt it,” said O’Foggarty. “And Villiers, though confined with his wound, had wanted to see the poor fellow in prison; but the poor fellow himself refused to admit any one.”

"Go on," again repeated Pearce. "Why do not you make haste?"

"We all looked round," continued O'Foggarty, "and saw the clerk administering the oath to Villiers himself, who was sitting at the left hand of the judge, looking pale as death from his wound. And, I do not know how it was, he seemed to be shuddering all over, and looked more like a spectre than a man, as if he had seen something."

"And did he give his evidence?" cried Pearce.

"Yes," replied O'Foggarty, "quite distinctly. He had seen the poor fellow cut down one of the yeomanry with his own hand. And then he described how he had been at the head of the mob in the cloister, and had attacked Villiers himself. It was clear as day. The poor fellow had no counsel; and he refused to make any defence. Only he said that he had been neglected from his childhood—left without father or mother—and that he had been doing rightly, fighting against the oppressors of the poor, and the enemies of the faith. I saw Villiers's face when he talked of being left without father or mother. It was horrid to see it."

"Go on," repeated Pearce, exultingly.

"And then the judge summed up, and told the jury that they could have no doubt—that Villiers's evidence must hang him—and that whatever might be done with the others, here murder had been committed, and the law must take its course."

"Is that all?" asked Pearce.

"I do not know any more," replied the other, "for there was a bustle in the court. Villiers had fallen down, and they were taking him out. And I came off as quick as possible, for it is full twenty miles from here. And I only had the letter to-day about the secret passage, and orders to get you out without delay. And there is no time to lose. Get

up, and dress directly. Hark! there is some one coming!"

And at that moment footsteps were heard approaching along the cloister. And O'Foggarty, hastily closing his dark lantern, paused, and then, as they came nearer, retreated hastily into the passage in the wall, turned the huge stone softly in its pivot, and, with the clicking of a spring, Pearce felt himself once more left in darkness.

But the door of his cell opened, and another light appeared. It was Beattie.

No one knew what passed at that interview. The deep-toned bell of the Priory told out one, two, three, four, five, and Beattie did not come out of the cell; and the relentless, remorseless, hardened wretch, even under this last trial and attempt to soften him on the part of a long-suffering Providence, counted the strokes with a greedy ear, as if waiting for a certain time to elapse before he acted. And meanwhile he listened doggedly and with a sullen triumph to Beattie, whose suspicions had been roused by some communication with Cookesley, and who now with entreaties, and now with solemn adjurations, endeavoured to ascertain if the dreadful surmise which had flashed across his mind had any foundation. Pearce relentlessly remained silent. He muttered to himself — "Twenty miles! — it must take at least two hours. It will be all over at eight o'clock." And then he looked at his watch.

At last, as it struck a quarter to six, the door of the cell opened, and Beattie, horror-struck, but full of terrified impatience, was rushing into the cloister. The voice of the prisoner called him back. "Remember," he said, "the terms. I will tell it to none but Villiers. He shall come here himself. He shall beseech me to do it. He shall kneel down at my feet. I will put my heel upon his accursed neck.

He shall swear to me never to take notice of what I tell him, so as to involve me in any difficulty. He shall sign a bond, here, upon the spot, to pay me five thousand pounds, and then I will tell him where he may find his son. Are you agreed?"

"And if he find not his son?" said Beattie.

"It shall be void," cried the other, with a hoarse chuckle of exultation.

* * * *

We will not pass again into that dark chamber with Beattie and with Villiers. What Pearce had demanded, what he had thirsted for, laboured for during years — what he had purchased at the expense of his soul, he enjoyed. Providence granted him his heart's desire. Not figuratively, but really, Villiers knelt down at his feet. Not figuratively, but really, the wretch who had been his menial set his foot upon his master's neck, and almost spurned him; and Villiers bore it all. He remembered the curse of undutifulness, to be made a servant of servants. He only looked up imploringly, for his heart was nearly broken with a frightful apprehension of he knew not what. He made the promise; he signed the bond. And, when Pearce had snatched it ferociously from him, he waited as one powerless, crushed, all but annihilated, to hear the announcement so longed for, yet now so dreaded.

Pearce looked once more at his watch, and at that moment it struck six. "It is twenty miles," he said, coolly, "is it not, to Broughton? It will take you at least two hours to get there, half-an-hour to start. Take it!" he exclaimed, and he threw a packet of paper, tied and sealed with black, into Villiers's hands. "Go to the prison at Broughton; you will find your son — on the scaffold!"

They were the last words Pearce uttered in that cell. Villiers had no sooner staggered from the

room than he disappeared, with a triumphant laugh, within the secret passage, where his accomplice had been waiting for him to escape.

* * * * *

Seven o'clock struck at the turnpike gate of St. Colomb's, about fourteen miles from Broughton, as a carriage and four drove at full gallop through it—the horses dropping with sweat—the postilions whirling their whips, and spurring them till the blood flowed—the servants behind standing up and waving their hats to warn every thing in the way from obstructing the passage. The blinds were drawn. At one point a trace broke, and a face full of agony was thrust from the window, imploring,—oh, with what anguish—that they should not delay. It was Beattie. Another figure was in the inside, kneeling on the bottom of the carriage, motionless—speechless. Not twenty-four hours afterwards his hair, which had been of a glossy black, had turned white with the agony of those two hours. Beattie endeavoured once to speak to him, to lift him up, to make him rest his head in his own arms; but the look of piteous entreaty that he might be left to himself was so earnest, so full of woe, that Beattie dared not repeat the effort. There are states of mental torture when we dread even a touch and movement as much as if the body were all one ulcer.

Eight o'clock struck as the carriage whirled round the corner of the narrow street at the entrance into Broughton. There was an enormous crowd. The postilions, ready to drop with exhaustion, were compelled to walk their horses. In vain Beattie spoke from the windows—entreated—besought the people to make way. They were laughing, shouting, hurrying forward in joyous confusion to the market-place, where the prison stood, to see an execution; for to Englishmen an execution is

a spectacle as entertaining as a farce. Two men contrived to get, one on each side of the carriage. One was singing a vulgar ribald song about Ernest some-one — the name could not be heard — who had killed a yeomanry soldier. The other was crying his last dying speech and confession, and thrust it into the windows. Villiers looked up, and asked if to advance was impossible—if they could not walk ; but at that moment the great bell of the prison began to toll, and he knew that it was too late now to reach the spot before all would be over. He rose up, seated himself in his seat, quietly drew down the blind which Beattie had drawn up in the vain attempt to urge the crowd to make way for the carriage, begged Beattie to tell the postilions to take care not to drive over any one, and, closing his eyes, composed himself to resignation. Beattie was astonished, and unable to account for his calmness, till he remembered David. It was the tranquillity, not of despair, but of certainty. Any state was more endurable than doubt. Any dispensation of Heaven, once sealed, was to be accepted with patience and submission.

Beattie now ventured to propose that they should not go at once to the prison, but to the house of the clergyman of the town, whom they both knew. But just then there was a stir and movement in the crowd, which he could not account for. He looked out. The carriage had reached the market-place. In front stood the dark, gaunt, eyeless wall of the county prison, and over the gateway was the gloomy erection, towards which Beattie dared not look. The crowd seemed angry, disappointed ; they were separating, pushing away, with oaths and imprecations, from the point of attraction. A sudden movement of the carriage, as it became entangled among the struggling and fighting mob, brought Beattie's

eyes unwillingly to the point which he had so dreaded facing; but, to his surprise, the fearful object which he had expected to behold was not there. The bell had ceased to toll; and yet the scaffold was unoccupied. Loud voices began to be heard. "Is it a reprieve?" asked a woman close to the carriage-window. "No, I fancy not," was the answer. "Then, why do they not bring him out?" asked another. "Why do they keep us waiting here all this blessed day?" Beattie's heart beat till his breath was nearly gone. A policeman was standing in the crowd, who recognised the Villiers livery, and endeavoured to make way for the carriage. Beattie beckoned to him. He scarcely dared to speak; but the policeman recommended that they should turn into a by-street. "The people are coming away, sir," he said. "There is to be no execution this morning."

"Is there a reprieve?" cried Beattie.

"No, sir," answered the policeman, "not that; but I fancy something is the matter."

"Drive on, drive on," cried Beattie to the postilions, "to the prison."

The crowd made way; there was nothing any longer to attract them. The carriage stopped. The line of constables cleared a passage to the dark portal of the prison; the servants opened the door; and the mob, with that vulgar unfeeling curiosity which is characteristic of England in the nineteenth century, pressed and jostled forward to see what new shape of misery was approaching the place of punishment.

"Can you walk?" asked Beattie, tenderly; and to his surprise Villiers, as if nerved and composed, rose steadily, descended from the carriage, and, only clinging twice to the iron railing of the stairs, followed one of the jailers to the condemned cell.

Beattie said a few words to the chaplain, who was standing at the door; the cell was cleared of all but the physician, who was watching the effect of some medicine on a livid corpse-like figure which lay stretched upon the straw pallet, its face distorted with the effect of poison. Villiers knelt down by the bed, took his son's hand in his own—his cold, clammy, death-like hand—bowed his head upon it, but did not weep. He was dreaming of another place—of a blue sea, a seat scooped in the living rock, a trellised vine-covered cottage. His mind seemed wandering. And then there rose up before him a fair, pensive, exquisitely beautiful face; and then it changed, as in his dreams it often had changed, into that ghastly awful face which he had seen on his father's death-bed. It seemed strange, but his heart felt light. Any thing is better than doubt. He had found his son,—and his son was dead. All seemed over.

But all was not over. Villiers started, almost in terror; for the hand which had lain dead and motionless in his own stirred with a convulsive spasm. Beattie stooped over the face. The physician held a glass to its lips; and then, with a look of hope and joy, he motioned to Beattie to draw Villiers quietly from the room. He held his finger to his mouth, to indicate the necessity of silence; and Villiers, bewildered, unresisting, as one who had lost all power of thought and action, suffered Beattie to lead him away like a child.

* * * * *

An awful feeling thrilled through the hearts of every inmate of the Priory, when, about ten days afterwards, in the solemn service of the chapel, the prayers of the congregation were desired for a person, within their own walls, dangerously ill. No eye, but many thoughts, were turned to Vil-

liers himself, who, kneeling in his usual place, at the right hand of Beattie — so crushed with suffering that his head lay like lead upon his cushion, so altered with the agony which he had undergone that his dearest friend would not have known him — moved, indeed, his lips to join the deep and fervent Amen of the whole congregation, but could utter nothing. From the chapel he passed to a chamber, where, recovered to life and consciousness, but smitten with the slow and lingering hand of death, lay his lost treasure — his pardoned son. The physicians had ordered that nothing should be said or done which might disturb him; and Villiers therefore sat at a distance, out of sight, or knelt behind the bed, only drawing the curtain aside when a fitful sleep stole upon the fevered brow of his boy, and he could gaze on that face, so beautiful, and now so easily recognised, without being seen. Others often were kneeling with him, and among them Bentley, himself in sickness; and from many a heart, as from many a lip, morning and evening, in public and in private, prayers rose within those holy walls, that some token of good might still be showed upon him who had showed, under Heaven, so many such tokens to themselves. And at times even faint hopes sprang up that these prayers would be answered by the restoration of the sick to health and strength. His mind gradually returned. His vigour was so far recovered that he was enabled to be removed into the open air; and, placed in a wheel-chair, his head propped with pillows, he was drawn backwards and forwards along the broad terrace which ran in front of the cloisters, while Villiers himself walked at his side, now stopping to wipe the moisture from the pale forehead of the sick youth, now arranging the pillows with a hand of tenderness, and at times stooping over his face

till he almost touched it with his lips. And then he checked himself, for still the physician forbade that any thing should be said or done to cause the least excitement. And meanwhile Ernest looked on wondering, but softened almost to tears by the tenderness which watched over him. His eye had lost its fierceness; pain and suffering had obliterated from his beautiful face all the harsher lines of intemperance. It seemed as if a noble spirit within him was struggling to throw off a fearful and unnatural load of sin, which some hand from without had cast upon a generous nature. More than once he endeavoured to speak — to say something to Villiers which might show his gratitude. More than once, with a feeble hand, he laid bare a scar upon his breast, which had been there ever since the days of his boyhood — ever since Villiers had saved him from the fire; and pointing to it, he indicated that he knew who it was that had then rescued him, and was now tending him. And then he would take Villiers's hand, and press it to his parched lips; and, while the tears streamed from Villiers's face, his own eyes were suffused also. And once — oh, how Villiers's heart melted within him at that act! — when Villiers was taking leave of him for the night, he made signs for him to kneel down by the bed-side. And Villiers prayed for his son, not yet wholly lost. And he saw the lips of the sick moving at every petition, and his eyes upturned to heaven. And, when Villiers rose from his knees, the youth raised his head faintly from the pillow, and stretched out his hands to embrace him, and whispered, "If God had given me such a father, I should never have been what I am."

The next day Beattie sat by his bed-side, and found him able to bear conversation; and the day after, as the same hour approached, more than once

Ernest inquired when Mr. Beattie would come; for the words which he had heard had sunk into his heart, and he longed to hear them again. And day after day it was still the same. And, as Villiers listened to the accounts which Beattie gave him of these interviews, his eyes became blinded with tears; but they were tears of gratitude and hope. His son was a penitent.

Weeks passed, and though the Angel of Death still hung over the bed of the sufferer, and the last hour was only delayed, while the body was slowly breaking up, the soul within seemed purifying itself, and strengthening, and coming out, as the moon from a mass of clouds. And, after the terrible sharp agonies of remorse were past, and some degree of calmness was restored, a change came over the whole nature of that troubled spirit. It became gentle, and humble, and tranquil; and, at last, permission was given, and Villiers laid the head of his sobbing boy upon his own breast, and whispered to him, that he had a father upon earth as well as in heaven.

And then there was a solemn, awful, but blessed rite in that sick chamber. And then the room was closed up—closed to all but one person, who passed the days and the nights in prayer, kneeling by the lifeless form of his lost yet recovered son. The day approached when he was to part for ever with all that remained of him upon earth. The evening before, leaning on the arm of Beattie, Villiers desired to see himself the place where those dear relics would be deposited. The masons, who were opening the vault, had not been warned of his approach in time, and they were vainly endeavouring to conceal from him some object of horror which they had found on entering the catacomb. But Beattie caught sight of it, and Villiers too. It was a body

all but devoured by rats. A lantern, with the candle burnt out, lay in one corner. All over the pavement were traces of blood, as if the wretched man had fled from place to place before his ferocious assailants; and there were marks of bloody hands upon the walls, on one place especially, where the stones were convulsively scrabbled over with gory fingers, and a spring was found within the stone, but which had closed from the other side, and could not be opened. The extremities were wholly gone. The vitals must have been attacked last. A hat lay at some distance from the body, and in it was a name; and Villiers read it. It was the destroyer of his child.

* * * * *

“O Beattie!” Villiers used to say, as, many years after, evening after evening, accompanied by Bentley, they paced together the cloisters of the Priory, calm and sorrowing, yet not without gratitude and hope, for all the manifold increasing blessings of that holy abode, “will not the vengeance of Heaven, sooner or later, in some frightful shape, fall upon those miserable men, who, under the name and in the garb of religion, are rending asunder, in this country, ties which God has joined, and tearing the children of this empire from their Father in the State and in the Church, as my child was torn from me!”

THE END.

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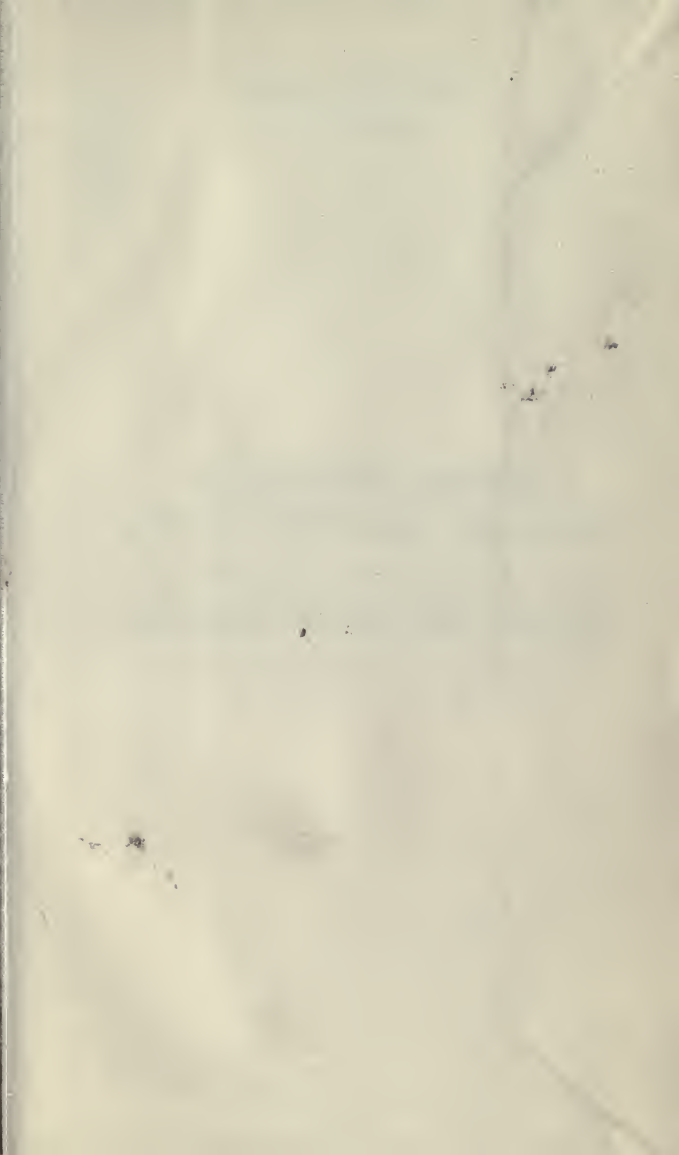
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